

Four dead in Algeria bomb blast

ALGIERS (AFP) — Four people were killed and 25 injured when a car bomb exploded Tuesday morning near a school complex in the Bah Al Oued district of Algiers, the security services reported. The blast hit a junior school and a nearby high school, witnesses told AFP at the scene. Some of the casualties were understood to have been pupils. "I saw slightly injured school children and three young girls from the high school who were unconscious, but I don't know if they were dead or only injured," a witness said. The blast happened in the western district of Algiers at 12:00 p.m. (11:00 GMT). Witnesses said the dead included a girl. The blast came one month less a day before the first legislative elections to be held in Algeria since December 1991.

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Indonesia: No ties with Israel

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia will not establish diplomatic relations with Israel until outstanding disputes between Israel and the Arab World are resolved, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said. "There will be no diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Israel until the Palestine and Arab-Israeli problems have been solved," Mr. Alatas said Monday at the opening of a United Nations-backed seminar on the Palestinians. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-populated country. "This is our principle, our basic stand and I believe the world will respect and understand our point of view."

20,000 troops and police to guard Pope in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Lebanese army has fully mobilised its troops ahead of Pope John Paul II's visit this weekend, a military source said. A total of 20,000 officers and men have been assigned to ensure security, while special measures have been taken in case the 76-year-old pontiff needs medical treatment. An army medical brigade has been mobilised, a helicopter has been assigned for emergency intervention and three beds have been reserved in the intensive care department of a Beirut hospital. Two more helicopters will provide aerial protection and a fourth will be used by a television team.

Turkish firms exhibit products in Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — Forty-two Turkish companies displayed their products on Tuesday in Baghdad to sell food and medicine to Iraq under its oil-for-food deal signed with the U.N. last year. The trade fair included food, farm machinery and medical equipment. The oil-for-food deal allows Baghdad to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to raise money to buy food and medicine for Iraqis, suffering from U.N. sanctions imposed on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Bomb blast kills two in South Lebanon

NABATIYEH (AP) — Two civilians were killed and two wounded Tuesday when a bomb exploded near the south Lebanese town of Nabatiyeh, security officials said. The explosion comes a day after Hezbollah guerrillas detonated three bombs, wounding four civilians and two Israeli-backed Lebanese militiamen of the south Lebanese army. Hezbollah and Amal, another Shiite group, blamed Israel for Tuesday's explosion. "It is a new (Israeli) massacre aimed at stirring up trouble ahead of Pope John Paul II's visit to Lebanon" this weekend, Amal said in a statement from south Lebanon.

Over 3,000 people arrested in a month in Egypt

MINYA, Egypt, (AFP) — The Egyptian authorities have arrested over the past month 320 people suspected of collaboration with armed Islamists as well as 3,050 others implicated in crime, police sources said on Tuesday. The arrests took place in sugar cane plantations, agriculture fields and cemeteries used as hideouts by the suspects as well as at homes in several villages in the southern province of Minya, they said. The authorities, who were looking for wanted criminals, also seized 98 weapons as well as a large amount of ammunition, they said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة باللغة العربية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

Crown Prince-Netanyahu Baqoura meeting cancelled

Water talks in 'mini-crisis' — Netanyahu

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hassan on Tuesday said Jordan and Israel have decided to call off a possible meeting between him and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Baqoura because the two sides have not concluded talks on water distribution.

That, the Prince said, led the Israeli authorities to call off a ceremony that "the bereaved families" of seven Israeli schoolgirls who were killed in Baqoura were planning to hold. In remarks to journalists after meeting with Israeli Labour Party official Yossi Beilin, Prince Hassan said that, at the request of the Israeli authorities, there was a possibility of a "human event" occurring in Baqoura today (Tuesday) with the families of the schoolgirls coming together in Baqoura in "what I had hoped would be a humane and a very genuine and solemn remembrance of the schoolgirls of Beit Shemesh."

The Crown Prince added: "It has been our feeling that one could have met there to say that if the families of the bereaved were to be accompanied by officials and political figures, one could have said that, despite the tragedy, and despite the loss of life on both sides, whether in Jerusalem, or Tel Aviv or Asqalan, or Gaza or Baqoura, that all are committed to breathing oxygen to the peace process."

"The question of water, if

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Tuesday spoke by telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the water-sharing dispute between the two countries, AFP said according to an Israeli Radio report quoting Mr. Netanyahu. The agency did not provide any details of the two leaders' telephone conversation.

we had worked expeditiously and effectively, could have been an issue on which a statement could have been made. We have made our point of view on the issue of water clear to the Israeli government and to Israeli governments since the signing of the peace treaty in 1994. This political meeting to discuss this issue was not possible because talks on the subject have not been concluded. The feeling was, in both governments, and this view was expressed through official channels, that maybe it would be better to call off the official meeting, and that led to the Israeli authorities advising that the meeting of the families of the bereaved would also be called off," Prince Hassan said.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali dismissed the notion that there is a "crisis" between Israel and Jordan but admitted that problems were there and said the Kingdom will go ahead in solving unresolved issues.

"Things happened, it is not a crisis," Dr. Majali told reporters following a Cab-

net session. "Still there are (problems) unsolved and we hope that these problems will be solved in the near future," the premier said adding that what the Kingdom wanted is nothing "but accurately implementing the peace treaty that was signed with Israel."

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told reporters following the Cabinet session Tuesday that "a provision" to provide Jordan with 50 million cubic metres of water could be signed at the same time as the memorial ceremony for the Israeli schoolgirls, but at the last moment "they said that they wanted the (Israeli) cabinet to discuss it and they were not ready to sign it."

Dr. Mutawi said that Minister of Water and Irrigation Munthir Haddadin visited Israel on Monday to finalise an agreement with his Israeli counterpart, Ariel Sharon, but the "Israeli side demanded postponing the signing of the agreement until they debated it with their government... therefore there were no pretext to conduct the meeting between officials from both sides."

In Tel Aviv, Mr. Netanyahu responded to the cancellation of the ceremony by saying: "This is a mini-crisis caused by a misunderstanding and a disagreement over the implementation of an agreement between the two countries."

During his meeting with

(Continued on page 2)

Beilin meets Crown Prince and premier to push his five-point solution to peace crisis

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Yossi Beilin, the contender for the Israeli Labour Party leadership, said on Tuesday he hoped that a five-point plan he proposed would succeed in removing the deadlock in the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks.

Mr. Beilin, a former deputy foreign minister and a senior member of the Knesset, said that he discussed the plan during

meetings with Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Minister of Foreign Affairs Faysal Tarawneh.

"The meeting (with the Crown Prince) went very well. We had an interesting discussion which took two hours. It was possible for us to cover many areas of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We agreed that the point in which the peace process (has reached its) lowest point, but there is still hope as long as we talk to each

other and as long as there are relations," Mr. Beilin said at the end of his visit.

Mr. Beilin said his initiative to remove the deadlock in the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians was aimed at saving the peace process and paving the way for the start of the final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

"I think that it is my (duty) to do whatever is in my power in order to

King confers Al Kawkab on S. Arabian Prince Abdul Aziz

Prince Hassan calls for promotion of scientific development in Arab World

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday awarded Prince Abdul Aziz Ben Ahmad Ben Abdul Aziz Al Saud, president of the Arab Council for Ophthalmology, Jordan's Al Kawkab Medal of First Order in appreciation of his great contribution to the advancement of Arab, regional and international ophthalmological societies.

The medal was presented to Prince Abdul Aziz during an audience at the Royal Court, attended by Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and the Saudi ambassador to Jordan, Abdullah Al Sudairi.

The King also received the president of the Arab African Council for Ophthalmology, Akaf Al Mughrabi, and a number of participants in the Fourth International Conference on Ophthalmology, held in Amman. The King welcomed the delegation and voiced appreciation to their efforts and achievements.

HRH Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday received Prince Abdul Aziz at the Royal Court who briefed him on the goals of the Fourth International Conference on ophthalmology, currently held in Amman. Prince Hassan called for promoting scientific



His Majesty King Hussein confers Al Kawkab Medal on Saudi Prince Abdul Aziz Ben Ahmad Ben Abdul Aziz Al Saud on Tuesday. Prince Abdul Aziz is the president of the Arab Council for Ophthalmology (Petra photo)

development in the Arab World. His Royal Highness also stressed the importance of maintaining contact with the foreign world and utilising its experiences to foster Arab identity.

Noting the important role Arab scholars can play in relaying the Arab cultural message to the foreign world, Prince Hassan voiced hope that Arab scholars in the United States would communicate this message to the world

and maintain continuous global contact on all levels, particularly the humanitarian field. Prince Abdul Aziz described the conference as a high-level, unique conference in view of the large number of professors and specialist doctors taking part in it, and the important array of research and studies presented to it.

The Saudi prince said the Arab Council on Ophthalmology is called upon to

support humanitarian activities in Africa, which is witnessing an increase in the number of the humanitarian field. The meeting was attended by Sudairi and directing the Crown Prince's office, Michel Hamaneh.

Also on Tuesday, Chamberlain Prince Raze Ben Zeid met with Prince Abdul Aziz on the sidelines of the conference and discussed with him scopes of cooperation between the two countries in the prevention of blindness.

Arafat announces resumption of security cooperation with Israel

GAZA STRIP (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat announced Tuesday that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) would resume security cooperation with Israel after a two-month break.

"We have decided to cooperate with the Israelis to preserve security for both our peoples," Mr. Arafat said after two hours of talks with Israeli President Ezer Weizman.

"We are totally committed to the security of the Israeli people and we will try together to go forward on this path," he said.

Israel had made a resumption of full security cooperation and Palestinian action against armed militants its main condition for resuming peace negotiations which broke down in mid-March amid violent Palestinian protests over the construction of a new Jewish settlement in disputed Arab east Jerusalem.

"We both have the responsibility to preserve the peace process for the sake of our children and your children, for peace in the whole region, including Syria and Lebanon," Mr. Arafat said at a joint press conference with Mr. Weizman.

The Israeli president, whose post is primarily ceremonial, for his part confirmed to Mr. Arafat that the Israeli government planned to build new housing for Arabs in Arab east Jerusalem to balance construction for Jews in the disputed sector of the city.

But a spokesman for Mr. Weizman said he reiterated during the summit meeting that the government would not bow to Palestinian demands that construction of

the Arab east Jerusalem settlement be frozen.

Mr. Weizman, who stressed repeatedly in the press conference that policy decisions in Israel were in the hands of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, added, "I came here to break the ice and explain that the problem of security was important for us."

Mr. Arafat "told me he would do all he could to ensure good security," he said.

"The message I brought from the prime minister is that he wants to continue the peace process and that he is adamant that the terror be stopped and fought."

Palestinian officials said the two leaders agreed to resume high-level security meetings with the participation of U.S. officials.

Tuesday's meeting was only the second between Mr. Weizman and Mr. Arafat and was widely seen among Israelis and Palestinians as a warm-up for the arrival Wednesday of U.S. Middle East peace mediator Dennis Ross.

A state department spokesman said Mr. Ross' aim would be to "rebuild trust and confidence" between the

two sides, but would stop short of offering a blueprint for resolving the crisis.

The gaps remaining between the two sides were clear at Tuesday's press conference when Mr. Arafat referred to Israeli land expropriation for settlement projects in his pledge on fighting violence.

"It is my will and the will of the PNA to combat terrorism in every place, including the terrorism of confiscating land and destroying houses," he said.

Palestinian aide Yasser Abed Rabbo added that "Arafat underlined to Weizman that there can be no resumption of negotiations without a clear signal for the stop of settlement building."

"Weizman said he would pass that message to Netanyahu," he said. There was no mention at the press conference of U.S. and Palestinian demands that Israel, as a confidence-building measure, step up implementation of its overdue obligations under already signed agreements, such as the authorisation of operations at a Palestinian airport and seaport in Gaza.

The Jordan Times
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(Continued on page 2)

Iraq urges Turkey to shun 'partnership' with Israel

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq called on Turkey on Tuesday not to align with Israel in a partnership against Arab countries, a day after Israel announced joint naval manoeuvres with Turkey and the United States.

The government newspaper Al-Jumhuriyah said, "It is in our interest and in the Arabs' to draw Turkey's attention to the dangers of letting itself be led by a U.S. plan to turn it into a regional policeman, sharing Israel's role as oppressor of peoples aspiring to freedom."

The paper said, "Iraq, Syria, the Gulf countries, North Africa and Iran all oppose a strategic Turkish-Zionist partnership."

Turkey has developed its military cooperation with Israel in the past year, despite protests from Arab countries and Iran.

Israeli, Turkish and U.S. ships will hold joint manoeuvres this summer in the Mediterranean Sea, the Israeli Defence Ministry said Monday.

The Iraqi editorial came as a Turkish trade fair opened Tuesday in Baghdad with 43 companies in the fields of food, metallurgy, motor vehicles and biomedical products participating.

"The fair's goal is to conclude contracts with Iraq," its director, Bilgin Aygul, told reporters.

Iraqi Finance Minister Hik-

mat Mezban Ibrahim Azzawi said that "the signing of contracts depends on the negotiations and the prices offered. In principle, there are no obstacles."

The annual volume of Iraqi-Turkish trade before the U.N. embargo on Iraq was \$2 billion, Mr. Azzawi said. The United Nations imposed the embargo after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

"Like us, Turkey suffered because of the blockade," because of the drop in trade, the minister said, adding that trade is now increasing.

Turkey said it wanted a major share of the trade with Iraq which was authorised in December when the U.N.

Security Council agreed to partially lift the embargo for the first time under Resolution 986.

The resolution, also known as the oil-for-food agreement, allows Iraq to sell up to \$2 billion in crude oil every six months.

About \$1.3 billion of the money goes toward purchasing food and medicine for Iraq. The rest goes for war reparations and the costs of the U.N. Special Commission on disarmament Iraq (UNSCOM).

The United Nations has said it will not completely lift its embargo until UNSCOM verifies that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction.

Israeli police stop expansion of Jewish settlement in W.Bank; settlers arrested

YIZHAR, West Bank (AFP) — Eighteen Jewish settlers were arrested and several hurt Tuesday when they tried unsuccessfully to stop Israeli police from demolishing houses built in a bid to expand their West Bank settlement, officials said.

It was the second time in less than a week that Israeli troops clashed with Jewish settlers over unauthorised expansion projects and the move drew loud protests from religious and far-right deputies in the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

More than 200 police and soldiers were involved in the operation to demolish the three houses under construction for the past several months about 800 metres outside Yizhar, a settlement located south of the Palestinian town of Nablus, Israeli army spokesman

Peter Lerner said. After police bulldozers destroyed two of the structures, about 30 settlers closed themselves up in the third building and had to be removed by force, said Amikam Harpas, commander of Israeli police in the northern West Bank.

"We had to force our way in after they were given two chances to voluntarily leave the premises but refused to do so," he said. The third structure was then razed.

Eighteen settlers were arrested and several were lightly injured, including some children, in scuffles between settlers and police during the incident, Mr. Lerner said.

In a similar confrontation on May 1, hundreds of police and settlers battled in Mizpeh Jericho outside the Palestinian town of Jericho as police removed two mobile homes

set up illegally in the small community. Four settlers were arrested in the incident.

Mr. Netanyahu decided last year to lift a four-year-old freeze on most settlement expansion in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. But specific projects for adding housing to the settlements must receive prior approval from the Defence Ministry.

Pro-settlement members of Mr. Netanyahu's coalition demanded an immediate debate on the army crackdown on illegal settlement building and some deputies threatened to withdraw from government over the matter.

Shaul Yaalom of the National Religious Party, which holds nine of the government's 66 seats in the 120-member parliament, said his group could not remain in government if the Yizhar and Mizpeh Jericho actions "mark a shift in gov-

ernment policy towards settlements."

Deputy Prime Minister Rafael Eitan of the far-right Tsomet Party demanded an immediate cabinet discussion of the matter and Michael Kleiner of Mr. Netanyahu's own Likud Party called for the resignation of the commander of Israeli forces in the West Bank, General Uzi Dayan.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been suspended over the settlement issue since mid-March when Mr. Netanyahu ordered construction to begin on a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The Palestinians claim that construction in Jewish settlements violates the spirit of signed peace agreements which they hope will lead to the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

Crown Prince-Netanyahu Baqoura meeting cancelled

(Continued from page 1)

Israeli and Jordanian journalists Tuesday, the Crown Prince said he personally "would not forget the tragedy and the crime committed in Baqoura. I don't think any of us will forget the image of His Majesty King Hussein visiting the families of the schoolgirls, which was an expression of how vital the peace process is, how humane the peace process is."

"I hope that the meeting (of the families) will be rescheduled and I hope that we can talk of a peace crown."

The Crown Prince said, in response to a question, that there is bitterness and argument in the Jordanian, the Palestinian, the Israeli, the Syrian, the Gulf countries, North Africa and Iran all oppose a strategic Turkish-Zionist partnership.

Prince Hassan reiterated Jordan's commitment to comprehensive peace, rejection of settlement activities as illegal and opposition to attempts to change the facts on the ground in occupied Jerusalem.

Prince Hassan said his meeting with Mr. Beilin was unofficial. It was a coincidence that the meeting took place on Tuesday, he said. He said Jordan is concerned that the form and substance of the relationship between the Jordanian and the Israeli governments remains clear. He said

nobody in the Israeli government or the Israeli body politic should ever think that we will be a party to internal Israeli politics or interfere in Israeli domestic affairs.

The Prince stressed that the Jordanian and Israeli governments could agree on certain issues and differ on others, but dialogue will not stop.

He welcomed the resumption of U.S. efforts to reactivate the Palestinian-Israeli talks. He also welcomed European efforts in this regard.

Mr. Beilin, who arrived here in a short visit and met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh, said he hopes that the two countries will be able to solve the crisis.

"Apparently the main issue was the problem of water and I think that there was hope that today (Tuesday) there could have been a declaration referring to water in the context of the ceremony and eventually such an agreement has not been achieved," said Mr. Beilin.

Mr. Beilin added that as a result of this, it was impossible for the Jordanian leadership to participate in the ceremony.

He said that he hoped that it will be overcome and that it would be possible to renew the talks on water as soon as possible.

"I was glad to hear from the Crown Prince that he is intending to visit Israel in the coming future to talk to the people and university students and to others and to meet with the prime minister and I encouraged him to do so," Mr. Beilin told reporters.

SSC says its shares in newspapers...

(Continued from page 1)

since the SSC is categorised as an official public institution, it is therefore obligated to sell its stake in the press companies.

The SSC owns 32 per cent of Al-Dustour and 47 per cent of Al-Rai shares and the government owns an additional 15 per cent in Al-Rai via the Jordan Investment Corporation, its official investment arm.

The government has been grappling with the issue of "government-owned" shares in the local press institutions since the implementation of the 1993 Press and Publications Law, which obligated the government to reduce its equity in both Al-Dustour and Al-Rai within four years of the implementation of the law.

According to senior journalists in Al-Rai and Al-Dustour, the law was intended to reduce government holding in the companies in order to enhance freedom of the press. They maintain that although the government does not practice direct censorship, its equity in the newspapers gives it the power to determine who sits on the board of both companies, and therefore dictate editorial policy.

As a result, said a senior Al-Rai official, his newspaper practices heavy self-censorship, and that its news coverage and editorial policy would change if the government sold its shares.

The status of the SSC, in question until last week, and the means of the sale seem to have delayed the decision to sell which was expected in late March. Minister of Information Samir Mutawi, however, has insisted that "the issue of the shares will be settled within the requirements of the law by the 17th of May."

He told the Jordan Times yesterday that "the position of the government remains unchanged" in spite of the statement from the SSC.

Although Mr. Toukan did not comment specifically on SSC's shares in the Jordan Press Foundation, he stated in an earlier interview with the Jordan Times that the corporation would not be willing to sell its shares in spite of the pending ruling on the SSC's status.

"The government has talked to us about this issue," Mr. Toukan told the Jordan Times. "I said that this is not a government entity, it's a public shareholding institution, and we are managing this money to meet our future needs."

"If an interpretation comes that is not in our favour, we won't accept it," he said.

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The SSC investment in the press companies has been a particularly lucrative one. Al-Rai, with a market value of JD 10 per share, pays 50 per cent annual dividends on the share, and Al-Dustour pays approximately 25 per cent.

Mr. Toukan said that although he recognised the necessity to enforce articles of the Press and Publications Law, further interpretation of his corporation's status was necessary.

"We are looking at this as a purely financial matter," Mr. Toukan said. "Al-Rai is giving us 50 per cent on the share — why should I give this up?"

"Of the limited opportunities available to us, this is an area where we would like to maintain our investment in order to meet long-term commitments and obligations, and I am only willing to sell if I get the proper rate of return," Mr. Toukan added.

The SSC's 15-member board, he said, including its six government members, is of one mind on the issue.

"We do not want to sell at this time," he said.

Mr. Toukan could not be reached for further comment on Tuesday.

National Constitutional Party announced official

(Continued from page 1)

spokesperson during the negotiations between the merging parties and secretary-general of Al-Watan, Hakim Kheir, Al-Watan President Akif Fayez was nominated as president of the NCP's "Political Guidance Committee."

The leaders of the other seven parties participating in the merger, will all be deputy secretaries general of the new party, Mr. Kheir told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Saad, was nominated to chair the new party's central council, while the secretary general of the Reawakening Party, Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh, was nominated to head the Political Committee. Mr. Kheir added.

Secretary-General of Al-Wa'd Party Anis Muasher will head NCP's financial and economic committee and become the party's treasurer, while the secretary general of the Jordanian National Alliance, Mijhem Khreisha, was assigned the chair of NCP's Programme Committee.

Mr. Kheir was nominated head of the Information Committee and in charge of the party's relations with other parties.

The nine parties merged into the NCP are: — The Progress and Justice Party, headed by Ali Saad. A prominent businessman. Mr. Saad is currently chairman and managing director of the Jordan Tobacco & Cigarette Co. Ltd., as well as honorary consul general of the Republic of Cyprus.

— Al Ahd, headed by Abdul Hadi Majali. Former minister of public works and housing and Karak deputy in the Lower House of Parliament. Mr. Majali has been director-general of the Public Security Department, ambassador to the U.S. and Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff for Operations.

— Al Wa'd, headed by Anis Muasher. Former minister of finance and a prominent businessman. Mr. Muasher is also president of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN).

The Jordanian National Alliance, headed by Minister of Agri-

culture Mijhem Khreisha. Mr. Khreisha has worked at the Royal Court as assistant chief of the press section and deputy chief of Royal Protocol. He has also been deputy director of HRH Crown Prince Hassan's office.

— Al Watan. Al Watan's presidency is held by Akif Fayez, while Hakim Kheir is the party's secretary-general.

— The Jordanian Arab Masses Party, headed by Abdul Khaleq Shataat.

— The Reawakening party, headed by senator, former deputy prime minister, and former minister of education, Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh.

The Popular Unity Party, headed by Talal Ramahi.

— The Jordanian Popular Movement (JPM), based in Irbid and headed by Jamal Khatib. The JPM joined the newly announced bloc only in the very last phase of the negotiations, becoming the ninth party in the merger. One of the youngest parties in the Kingdom, Dr. Khatib's JPM was officially registered in October 1996.

After an unspecified interim period, the "acting leadership" will make way to a new secretariat and internal elections will be held.

According to Mr. Muasher, the interim period might last "one year."

In the upcoming general elections, the NCP counts on the votes of "the majority of the people, who reject extremism ... and believe in an open economic strategy which will bring Jordan in the club of the developed countries."

Mr. Muasher told the Jordan Times in an earlier interview.

The NCP's political programme will focus on economic reforms, Mr. Muasher said, including "the privatisation and liberalisation process and all the economic reforms that have been promised by governments, but never realised."

He announced that the new party will also present an economic plan to be publicised "in the early days of the party," and it will suggest the methods for its implementation.

Beilin meets Crown Prince and premier

(Continued from page 1)

the Oslo agreement in letter and spirit, and that there would be no violence by both sides and each would do whatever possible in order to prevent attacks on the others.

"The third is the first step of further redeployment will be immediately implemented and there would be an agreement between the Palestinians and ourselves about the second step

which will be implemented by the seventh of September this year. Then the talks about the permanent solution should be resumed and the context on security should be also resumed immediately," he added.

Mr. Beilin, a second-ranking candidate for the leadership of the Labour Party, met last week with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and discussed with him his five-point plan. Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the plan and a spokesman for the prime minister on Tuesday lashed at Mr. Beilin's visit to Jordan and said that he had not the right to discuss the Palestinian-Israeli talks with Jordanian officials.

Asked whether his plan was part of a campaign to win the leadership of "Labour, Mr. Beilin said: "Well if I can win my campaign by making peace, it will be, I believe, a very

good contribution not only to me but also to the region."

Mr. Beilin's visit coincides with a "crisis" between Israel and Jordan over the Israeli decision to delay the signing of a water agreement, which was expected to be signed on Tuesday. Prince Hassan cancelled a meeting with the Israeli premier in Baqoura yesterday.

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16:00 America's Funniest People
16:25 Spill Binder
16:50 Des — Challenge
17:30 Border Town
18:00 British Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:00 Doc — World War II
20:30 Challenges
21:00 Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00 News in English
22:25 Cobra
23:00 Han to Hart

PRAYER TIMES

04:14 Fajr
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16:12 Ashr
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WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Temperatures will continue their gradual rise with skies sunny and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas calm. Amman 09:27

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Palestine, Shmeisani 697071

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The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir, 775111/26

Army, Marka, 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital, 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery, 865199

ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)909990

IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:00 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

08:00 Larnaca (RJ)

09:00 Damascus (RJ)

09:35 Jeddah (RJ)

09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

15:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

17:40 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)

17:40 Frankfurt (RJ)

Other Flights

08:15 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)

10:30 Cairo (MS)

11:00 Sanaa, Hudaidah (Y)

12:00 Jeddah (SV)

12:55 Bucharest (RO)

13:10 Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)

14:30 Tunis (TU)

16:20 Algiers (AF)

17:00 Doha (Q7)

19:00 London (GA)

19:30 Istanbul, Damascus (BA)

20:40 London (PA)

21:10 Beirut (ME)

21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)

21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)

23:20 Istanbul (TK)

23:25 Amsterdam (KL)

23:30 Athens (OA)

05:15 Ankara (TK)

DEPARTURES

09:45 Paris, Aqaba (add) (RJ)

09:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

11:45 Rome (RJ)

11:30 Istanbul, Casablanca (RJ)

11:45 Berlin, London (RJ)

20

Queen celebrates tenth anniversary of SOS Village establishment in Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — The SOS Village in Amman Tuesday celebrated the tenth anniversary of its establishment with Her Majesty Queen Noor.

Four of the SOS "mothers," who have been with the village since its founding, were presented with certificates and rings by Queen Noor, who is the Honorary President of the SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan, and by President of SOS Kinderdorf International Helmut Kutin, a Royal Court statement said.

Mr. Kutin affirmed that SOS Kinderdorf International, in light of the success of the Jordanian experience, the commitment of the devoted SOS mothers and the dedication of the SOS Village Association of Jordan, will establish a third SOS village in Irbid.

Mohammed Mamser said that of the 20,000 orphaned children in the Kingdom, 10,000 are sponsored ("kafel") and 1,000 live in orphanages, according to the statement.

During a state visit to Austria in 1982, the Queen negotiated with former President of Austria Bruno Kreisky on the establishment of an SOS village in Jordan.

The first Jordanian SOS Children's Village was inaugurated by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor on May 7, 1987 in Amman and due to its success, SOS Kinderdorf International established the Aqaba SOS Village, which was opened in Aqaba in 1992.

The latter received a Citation for Outstanding Achievement at the 1994 World Habitat Day ceremony, the statement said.

The two villages provide family homes for orphaned and abandoned children, who live under the care of Jordanian "mothers" in a close knit community.

The village comprises 8-12 homes with nine family members each, kindergartens for the children living in the villages and the local community, a supermarket and a vocational training centre in Sahab. Some of these affiliated projects help offset operating expenses and offer training and employment opportunities for the SOS youth.

Two youth houses were established in 1993 to provide accommodation and vocational training for the under boys and girls of the two villages until they are mature enough to lead independent lives, according to the statement.

The SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan

finances the two villages and the two youth houses through private donations from Jordan and abroad.

This is done through a sponsorship programme which gives Jordanian and international families and institutions the opportunity to sponsor a number of the children.

Attending the celebration were Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and his wife Mrs. Jamie Majali, the governors of Irbid and Aqaba, NHF Executive Director Yasser el-Tal, Regional Director of SOS Lucien Rotca, Chairman of SOS Board of Trustees Ali Krayyem, National Director of SOS Village Lina Kopyt and SOS Board of Trustees members.

Abu Khajil's defence team appeals conviction

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The defence team of the former Sri Lankan honorary consul, who was sentenced to a three-year imprisonment term with hard labour last April, on charges ranging from selling babies to forgery of official documents, Tuesday stated that it has submitted a petition to the Court of Appeals.

Tawfiq Abu Khajil, 57, was convicted by the Amman Court of First Instance of selling one baby, attempting to sell a second and of forgery and use of forged documents.

Attorney Ahmad Tbeishat maintained that he submitted a 21-page appeal contesting the court's verdict

and calling for the full acquittal of his client.

The former honorary consul was formally charged in March 1996 with use of forged documents, 36 counts of forgery of official documents, 36 counts of baby sales (illegal under a 1929 law against slavery), possession of unlicensed firearms, import of illegal wireless devices, abuse of trust and forgery of a government seal.

Mr. Abu Khajil, currently freed on bail of JD 20,000, was acquitted by the same court of the additional seven charges.

He originally received a 14 year imprisonment term with temporary hard labour, but the court ordered that he serve only three years in light of his apparent bad

health.

Also sentenced with Mr. Abu Khajil, was a Sri Lankan national, Anourma Laji, 32, who was sentenced to one year in prison after she was convicted of attempting to sell her five-month old baby to a Dutch couple on March 13, 1996.

A third woman, Andrea Bustani, 37, Mr. Abu Khajil's secretary, who is being tried in absentia, was acquitted by the same court.

In a related development, the Criminal Court, where Mr. Abu Khajil is presently being tried on charges of raping four Sri Lankan women, Tuesday postponed his case to June 7.

The court is awaiting an Amman Criminal Court ruling on the four Sri Lankan women who appar-

ently changed initial statements made to the prosecutor, and are currently being tried for perjury.

Meanwhile, the State Security Court Tuesday for the second time postponed issuing a verdict in the case of two journalists accused of lese majeste.

Journalist Nahed Hamar is standing trial on charges of slandering both His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan, while journalist Abdullah Abu Ruman is accused of verbally slandering the King.

The court tribunal, which postponed the case for further examination, set May 21 as the new date to issue a verdict in the case.

CDD to conduct emergency monthly drills

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) announced plans to launch emergency monthly or semi-monthly drills in factories and institutes every month in an effort to minimise factory accidents.

"Our emergency drills are directed at checking the safety equipment and preparedness of the factories, as well as training and increasing the efficiency of CDD rescue teams," a CDD official said.

He told the Jordan Times that the department step was initiated to parallel industrial advancements as well as an increase in the sheer number of factories which manufacture hazardous material in the Kingdom.

"In the past, the department would conduct simple emergency drills, however, beginning this year, the new emergency exercises deal with each case as though it were an actual accident," the official stated.

The department coordinates with each factory or institution to specify a certain date and time to conduct the drill, as well as the necessary steps to be taken



CDD demonstrates technique used in emergency drills aimed to check safety equipment and preparedness of factories, as well as training and increasing the efficiency of CDD rescue teams (CDD photo)

beforehand, he added.

In the past, CDD officials repeatedly expressed concern regarding factory employees who did not follow proper safety measures.

In a recent interview with the Jordan Times, Director of the Department of Operations at the CDD Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Rahabieh stated that fire

accidents have been on the increase of late.

The CDD has launched three emergency drills in the past two months; one in the Ambassador Hotel in Amman, another in a chlorine factory in Mawqar and, on Tuesday, the CDD conducted an exercise drill in a gas cylinder factory in Irbid.

"These drills are a precautionary measure aimed at minimising human and financial losses," the CDD official said.

According to the CDD official, some factories, such as chemical factories, and other institutes have agreed to conduct annual emergency drills.

Conference promotes importance of pre-marital medical checks

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The importance of pre-marital medical checks was the topic of a Saturday conference at Al Affa charitable committee in the meeting hall of the King Abdullah Mosque.

The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zaid.

The committee, in association with the Ministries of Health, Social Development and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, focuses on health awareness in Jordan and emphasises the necessity of medical examinations for the well-being of both family and nation, according to Abdul Latif Arabiat, chairman of the committee which was established in 1994.

The new campaign, which will last six months, is to educate the society regarding the concept [of pre-marital medical checks], Dr. Arabiat said.

The campaign's goal is to support the enactment of legislative regulations which would make medical tests compulsory [before marriage], he added.

Obligatory regulations would prevent the finalisation of any marital contracts unless medical reports are produced, Dr. Arabiat explained.

Mousa Hammouri, paediatrician consultant in Amman, expressed his support for pre-marital testing after witnessing and treating cases of children with birth defects. "Maladies passed on through parents who [scientifically] should not be married cause personal, familial and societal problems," Dr. Hammouri asserted.

"Marriage and children are the basis of human reproduction," he added. "[This institution] should be respected and newly-weds should provide all the good facets of humanity to their children instead of depriving them [of such]."

Diseases are heritable if both parents carry either recessive or dominant genes [which indicate the presence of such], Dr. Hammouri explained.

A healthy person can be a carrier of a certain disease, he explained. "If recessive carriers marry, their children have a 25 per cent chance of a healthy birth, a 25 per cent chance of congenital disease and 50 per cent chance of being carriers, themselves."

On the other hand, if both parents are dominant carriers, the chances are evenly split that the children be either carriers or, themselves, affected with the disease, Dr. Hammouri added.

Blood tests are the easiest and least costly method of testing which might indicate the absence of any hereditary disease and Dr. Hammouri advises such for all couples intending to marry.

He stated that genetic engineering is still under intense study and that its main goal is to treat the genes which alter the chromosomes and lead to the abnormalities in children.

Many diseases are inherited from marriages of parents who are both carriers, most commonly thalassemia and phenyl ketonuria, Dr. Hammouri stated.

Al Affa charitable committee also heard the religious aspects of the subject.

Islam and medicine agree on the same principles and instruct adherence to similar codes, Dr. Arabiat maintained.

The Prophet Mohammad encouraged Muslims, in different prophetic Hadiths, to "marry strangers" and to "raise a healthy breed," and different Koranic Verses order Muslims "not to throw themselves with their bare hands in danger and jeopardy," he illustrated.

Abnormalities in children form a considerably high number in developing Arab countries due to the encouragement of marriages occurring within families over several generations, especially cousins, increasing the possibilities of bearing unhealthy and diseased children, Dr. Arabiat maintained.

The Ministry of Health has shown concern and cooperation with the committee and has offered free medical tests for prospective married couples.

The number of children so afflicted is high amidst uneducated and poor families, therefore the committee is working very hard to reach all of Jordan to spread public awareness, Dr. Arabiat said.

The committee seeks the well-being of all Jordanian children and their families, he concluded.

'Jordan, Tunisia agree to create free trade zone'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The head of a Tunisian delegation, currently visiting Jordan, Mohsen Arawi Tuesday held talks with President of the Amman Chamber of Commerce Haidar Murad.

He later announced that Jordan and Tunisia have tentatively agreed to create a common free trade zone.

Mr. Arawi, who is general director of the Tunisian Internal Trade Department, affirmed that the two sides have signed an accord which provides for a special committee to study the creation of the free trade zone.

The committee, expected to convene its first meeting in Tunis next month, will also examine the feasibility of increasing the volume of trade between the two countries.

Mr. Arawi confirmed that he and Mr. Murad discussed joint investment projects in tourism as well as promoting cooperation between the private sectors in the two countries.

Earlier, Mr. Arawi had opened talks with a Jordanian team regarding expert exchanges in regards to food supplies, distribution of food coupons for those in need and the role of the private sector in securing food supplies.

Secretary General of the Ministry of Supply Ahmad Kreishan, who led the Jordanian side to the meeting, stated that the two countries are planning to promote trade and economic relations as well as aid each other in supply-related matters.

Mr. Kreishan detailed the Jordanian experiment in securing a strategic storage of food supplies as well as ensuring the fair distribution of fodder to livestock breeders and usage of food coupons.

He also summarised the relatively new system of supplying the public with financial subsidies to help offset an increase in bread prices.

Mr. Kreishan then briefed the Tunisian delegation on arrangements for allocating the importation of food supplies to the private sector, thus replacing the Ministry of Supply in that matter.

The minister additionally recounted decisions concerning the floating prices of various goods.

Tuesday's meeting marked the first since Tunisian Prime Minister Hamid Karoui visited Jordan last December, co-chairing the higher Jordanian-Tunisian Joint Committee meeting with the then-Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti to discuss bilateral cooperation in economic, trade, cultural, tourism and higher educational fields.

At the time, the two sides agreed on lists of goods to be reciprocally exempted from customs duty and set up a sub-committee to report on the progress of the implementation of agreements.

SSC to submit draft law to Council of Ministers

By Issam Qadamani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) will submit a new draft law, aimed at ridding the corporation of financial bottle necks, to the Council of Ministers at the end of the month and embark on wider-scale investment, SSC Director General Safwan Toukan announced Tuesday.

Dr. Toukan described the SSC as having reached the stage in which it can allocate JD 100 million to finance the construction of government buildings to be repaid in the form of annual rent.

Once the loan and its interest has been paid, the government will be named owner of these buildings, he added.

The Cabinet's Ministerial Council on Development has discussed the idea, expected to be implemented soon, Dr. Toukan affirmed.

The SSC has also finalised designs for the construction of a permanent headquarters for its offices, he stated

and the projected premises, to comprise 4,000 square metres in the neighbourhood of Um Uthaina in Amman, is expected to cost JD 7 million.

The SSC does not intend to pull out of companies in which it holds equity, according to the director general, and it will remain unaffected by the current privatisation.

He added that the SSC is willing to buy government shares in other organisations.

Dr. Toukan emphasised the corporation's independence from government input regarding its investments in private sector businesses.

Referring to future investments, the director general maintained "we are contemplating initiating investments in money-lending institution funds but not before the government ratifies a draft law on securities, a move which will enable the corporation to play a bigger role in the market."

The SSC will leave the management of investments in the private sector and remain as partner or financier, he said, adding that the SSC's total

investments in Jordanian markets now reach JD 60 million.

The corporation does not intend to raise the level of participation in any project above a 10 per cent rate as, he said, the corporation's policy is to expand horizontally.

The accumulated premiums paid to the corporation since it began its services in 1980 reached JD 871 million which, subsequent to investments, earned the corporation JD 370 million, he stated.

In 1996, the SSC's profits were tabulated at JD 61 million, however additional profit is estimated once new projects, in which the SSC has equity, commence operations, Dr. Toukan maintained.

Reporting on corporation expenses, he said that the SSC has spent JD 248 million on pensions, compensation payments and to cover the cost of occupational injuries since the corporation's inception.

Among the SSC's assets are three hotels: Amra, Petra and Aqaba as well as resthouses, altogether worth JD 65 million at current market prices.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

"Borrowers" (pt. 1 of 2) at the British Council, Jordan, Amman at 5:00 p.m.

LECTURES

"Trends in Globalisation of Business: Cooperation" by Dr. Prevez Ghauri at The Red Sea Jordanian Chambers of Commerce, Shmeisani, Amman at 5:00 p.m.

"Problems and Their Resources in Jordan" by Dr. Hamed Shoman at Abdul Hamed Shoman Foundation, Amman at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

"Recent drawings and sculptures by Mona Sandi" entitled "Petra Tablets" at her residence in Abdoun (Tel. 8299000) until May 15.

"Colours" an exhibit of modern design items and home accessories from "European creators" old Asfour, Mafraq, off Rainbow Street, until May 7.

"Works by contemporary painters from the Arab World" at Baladina Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5337598), until May 15.

"Works by Iraqi artist Nuri Al Rawi" entitled "Departure of Innocence from the World" at Hamqarabi Arts Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5356098) until May 15.

"Engravings by Salam Kanan" at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681304) until May 15.

Villa For Rent

Location: ABDOUN AREA

Consist of two Floors and Basement

1st Floor, 3 Master Bedrooms

Ground Floor, Reception, Dining

Living Rooms and Kitchen (Open area)

Basement: Maid's Room, Laundry

and Storage Rooms with children's

play yard.

Telephone, Centrally heated, Garage

and Garden.

For more information call

Tel.: 813112 between 2:30 - 6:30

COLOURS

An exhibit of modern design items and home accessories from top European creators

at the old Asfour Mansion, Shari' Othman

Beri Affan, off Rainbow Street.

From 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. & 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. until May 7

Save water... every drop counts!

Europeans advise Pakistan to take Kashmir issue to the Hague

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — A visiting delegation from the European Parliament said Tuesday they had advised Pakistan to take the 50-year Kashmir dispute with India to the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

The suggestion was put to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by Jan Wiebenga, a Dutch member of the European Parliament, when the four-member delegation met the premier on Monday, they said.

Mr. Sharif said he would discuss the suggestion with

Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral at their meeting during the May 12-14 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in the Maldives, Mr. Wiebenga said.

The European Parliament members, led by Briton Anita Pollack and including Imelda Read from Britain and Italian Maria Colombo, told a news conference the European Union "strongly supports" a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute through dialogue.

Ms. Pollack said the

European Parliament had not formally recommended the Kashmir issue be referred to the International Court but the suggestion was a common view of members of her delegation.

Mr. Wiebenga said the international community was concerned that any future war between Pakistan and India could involve the use of nuclear weapons.

Two of the three wars between Pakistan and India since their independence from Britain in 1947 have been fought over Kashmir,

which is split between the south Asian neighbours and claimed by both.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting a more than eight-year old Muslim revolt against Indian rule in Kashmir, which has claimed around 20,000 lives since 1989. Islamabad denies the charge, but vows political support for the campaign.

New Delhi holds the southern two-thirds of the Himalayan region and Pakistan the northern third.

Albanians locked in stalemate after failing to agree on voting system

TIRANA (R) — Albania's political parties were locked in stalemate Tuesday after overnight talks as a fifth round of discussions failed to agree on a voting system for early elections called to halt the country's slide towards chaos.

Despite the deadlock, Prime Minister Bashkim Fino will this week submit a draft electoral law to the interim all-party government that was appointed on March 9.

The law is likely to be passed by the 20-member government but could hit problems when it goes before parliament where the Democratic Party of President Sali Berisha holds the majority.

"If passed by the government, the draft law will go to parliament with a vote of confidence at the same time," Jorgji Kote, a spokesman for Mr. Fino, told Reuters Tuesday.

"If the electoral law is rejected then the government also falls and this will mean a return to the chaos and anarchy."

Mr. Kote said Mr. Fino

will go to Parliament after an official trip to the United States, for which dates are yet to be finalised.

This will be before May 15, the final date for approving the law if the election is to take place on June 29 as targeted. Parliament has to be dissolved for 45 days before an election.

Mr. Berisha agreed to

collapse of pyramid investment schemes pushed the country to the brink of anarchy.

The Socialists, who withdrew from a general election last May alleging fraud, won a commitment to fresh elections as the price of joining the coalition.

In 1996 the Democrats won a second term, taking 122 of parliament's 140 seats. International observers said voting in the third election since the 1990 fall of Communism was flawed.

The two main parties, the Democrats and Socialists, are now deadlocked on three main points.

Firstly the Democrats want a majority voting system, which helped them win a big majority last year, while the Socialists are pressing for proportional representation.

The Socialists maintain the security situation in Albania, where unofficial estimates say up to a million guns were looted from state arsenals in the unrest, precludes normal campaigning and the only fair voting system is proportional representation.

Two members of newly formed party, the Movement for Democracy, Alfred Serreqi and Feim Godo, were attacked by three masked men in Mamurras, 40 kilometres north of Tirana, Sunday, their car riddled with 15 bullets, in what was believed to be a political attack.

The second row is over the anti-genocide law which bans former Communists

from standing for public office.

The Socialists, the former Communists, would ideally like the law scrapped. As a compromise, Mr. Fino has proposed to amend the law to ban only those convicted of crimes against humanity, former Politburo and Communist Secret Service members.

Finally the two parties are at loggerheads over how to deal with citizens' groups, called salvation committees, that sprung up in towns in southern Albania as the state disintegrated.

Mr. Berisha argues the committees are armed, political forces that would make a free and fair election impossible.

The committees, deoying any political links or weapons, say they exist to help restore services and get back money lost.

Mr. Fino denies the socialists are linked to any of the groups and has proposed they disband after an election date is set.

"The prime minister has done his utmost to find a compromise for all parties," Mr. Kote said. "Once it reaches parliament, it will be in the hands of the Democrats and the president."

An early election is seen

as crucial to the long process of pacifying and rebuilding Albania where about 700 people have died since February, many the victims of accidental or revenge shootings, as lawlessness sweeps Europe's poorest state.

Australian senator resigns; threatens revenge

CANBERRA (R) — Independent Australian Senator Mal Colston, under police investigation over travel fraud allegations and deserted by the government, quit Tuesday as deputy president of the parliamentary upper house.

But Mr. Colston, who will remain in the Senate, threatened political revenge that could wreck government reforms.

Mr. Colston headed off a motion by non-government parties to oust him by handing in his resignation in a brief note to Senate President Margaret Reid just minutes before Senate resumed after a five-week break.

"I have received a letter from Senator Colston resigning as deputy president and chairman of committees," Ms. Reid told the Senate. Mr. Colston was not in the chamber.

The Queensland Senator, whose vote has been crucial to the passage of government legislation, said in two newspaper interviews he would now vote against the government which he accused of throwing him "to the wolves."

The Liberal-National Coalition government does not have a Senate majority and has relied on the support of Sen. Colston and another independent to pass legislation, including budget bills.

Prime Minister John Howard last month withdrew his support for Sen. Colston to hold the deputy presidency and said his government would no longer accept his vote.

Sen. Colston, who abandoned the Labour opposition last August to become an independent, told Sydney's Daily Telegraph he would turn against the government.

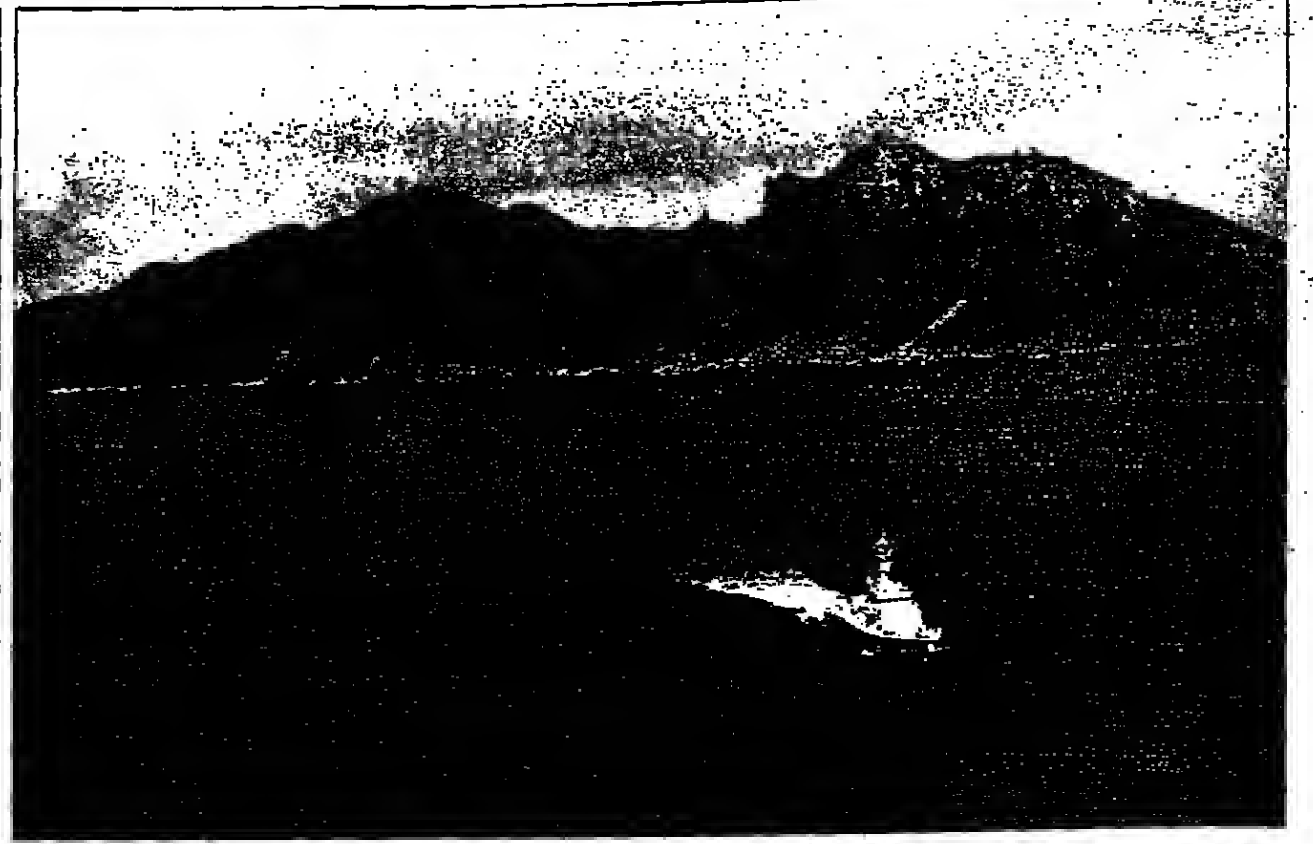
"Mr. Howard said he won't accept my vote. That's fine. I just seem to forget that I can vote against his government," Mr. Colston told the newspaper.

"It just seems to me if my vote is to count, the only way now is to vote against the government," Sen. Colston added in a separate interview with the Australian newspaper.

Sen. Colston's decision to vote against the government comes a week before Mr. Howard's administration announces its budget for the next financial year. The senate will vote on those budget measures later in the year.

Legislation needs majority support to pass the senate and if Sen. Colston votes with Labour and other minority parties, and the second independent continues to support Mr. Howard's administration, government measures would be blocked with a 38-38 tied vote.

The Senate unanimously voted to appoint Labour's Sue West to replace Sen. Colston as deputy president, resuming the tradition of having the president from the ruling party and the deputy from the main opposition party.



A small boat makes its way past the disputed island of Senkaku in this 1996 file photo. A Japanese legislator and three people accompanying him visited the Senkaku Islands, known in Chinese as the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea Tuesday, disputed by Japan, China and Taiwan, in a gesture the Tokyo government swiftly repudiated. The group headed by Shingo Nishimura, a conservative member of the main opposition New Frontier Party (Shinshintou), inspected the security situation and held a brief commemorative ceremony on the islands (Reuters photo)

Japan frets as legislator lands on disputed isles

TOKYO (R) — A Japanese legislator and three people accompanying him visited the Senkaku Islands, known in Chinese as the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea Tuesday, disputed by Japan, China and Taiwan, in a gesture the Tokyo government swiftly repudiated.

The group headed by Shingo Nishimura, a conservative member of the main opposition New Frontier Party (Shinshintou), inspected the security situation and held a brief commemorative ceremony on the islands.

The Hashimoto government's spokesman, Deiroku Kajiyama, told a news conference that while the islands were Japanese territory, the group's actions were "extremely regrettable" and should not be allowed to damage Japan-China relations.

The rocky cluster of uninhabited islands has ignited fiery nationalist passions in Chinese communities in Hong Kong and Taiwan since a Japanese right-wing group built a makeshift lighthouse there last July.

The lighthouse drew a flotilla of vessels in the months that followed carrying Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese protesters, several of whom briefly landed on the Japanese-administered islands.

Last September, a Hong Kong activist drowned when he jumped into stormy waters near the islands to press China's claim.

In February, Japan sent a letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in which it sought to have Tokyo's position on the islands included in a U.N. report on the law of the sea.

"In view of the history of the Senkaku islands and in the light of the relevant principles of international law, there is no question that the islands are an integral part of the territory of Japan, and that Japan has always exercised effective control over them. It is thus the position of the government of Japan that no question of territorial title should arise with respect to those islands," the letter said.

China says its ownership of the islands dates back to ancient times.

In Tuesday's landing, Mr. Ishihara remained in the boat and did not actually set foot on the island. The group criticised the central government in Tokyo for labelling a landing on the Senkakus last month by local assembly members

from Okinawa, which administers the disputed islands, "a provocative act."

The statement said: "The Senkaku islands are indisputably Japan's territory. It is a matter of course that a member of parliament should survey Japanese territory."

China Tuesday slammed the Japanese legislator for the visit, warning Tokyo the issue could damage Sino-Japanese ties.

"The illegal landing... is a serious violation of China's territorial sovereignty," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shao Guofang told a news briefing.

"The Chinese side expresses its strong indignation and opposition," Mr. Shao said. "The Chinese side will quickly make stern and formal diplomatic representations to the Japanese side."

"The Diaoyu matter will definitely affect the normal development of Sino-Japanese relations," Shen said. "We hope the Japanese side will take effective measures to remove the adverse results and negative effects."

The disputes range from that over the Spratlys, claimed in whole or in part by China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, to those between Japan, China and Taiwan over the Senkaku, or Diaoyu, island group in the East China Sea.

Shingo Nishimura, a conservative member of Japan's main opposition New Frontier Party, landed on one of the Senkakus on Tuesday, prompting an angry protest from China.

"Not only are marine resources an important dimension of Asia-Pacific security, but all the trends at present are in the wrong direction," Mr. Bateman said.

"The dual concerns of

securing offshore zones and vital shipping are major factors in the acquisition of naval arms in the region," he added.

Mr. Bateman said only a handful of countries had settled competing claims over exclusive economic zones.

He said the current system of exploiting marine resources based on national rights and obligations was "ineffective" because countries were acting largely in their own interest.

"These problems will continue, with consequent risks to national security unless new approaches to resource exploitation are found," Mr. Bateman said.

The three propellers can pivot through 90 degrees, permitting vertical take-off and landing with a ground crew of only three people. A fourth propeller like the stabilising rotor on a helicopter makes the ship turn on its axis.

The development of the Zeppelin NT took seven years and 40 million marks (\$23.5 million) said Wolfgang von Zeppelin, the present head of what is still a family firm.

"This is not a dream, but an enterprise which must be profitable,"

Zeppello Luftschifftechnik GmbH has already sold five of its new ships, to be used in Germany and Switzerland for pleasure flights and scientific observation.

For example, scientists from the University of Bonn plan to watch the solar eclipse due on Aug. 11, 1999 from a Zeppelin.

But the builders will have to sell 20 of its airships before it starts turning a profit. The market will be the same as for other dirigibles, including luxury tourism — an hour's flight costs at least \$240 a head — scientific research and surveillance, as a television platform or a giant advertising billboard.

Potential customers have already been found in Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States.

Apart from the quality of the product, Zeppelin Luftschifftechnik GmbH has one thing going for it: The romance of the name. Despite the Hindenburg tragedy, the fame of Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin and his flying machines is enough to attract 350,000 visitors to the company museum here, less than a year after it opened.

Fugitive separatist killed in shootout with Texas law agents

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A "Republic of Texas" separatist running from the law was killed in a shootout with police in west Texas, authorities said.

The fugitive, who has not yet been identified, was shot by a doghandler overseeing some 60 bloodhounds searching the area around the separatists' compound in the rugged Davis mountains, said Jo Schwicklund Moss, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Public Security.

Public Security agents had not yet retrieved the body by late Monday and were planning to use a helicopter or horses to navigate the "really rugged terrain," Mr. Moss said.

Richard Frank Keyes III, 21, and Mike Matson, 48, left the separatists' booby-trapped canyon compound Saturday two hours before

four others surrendered to the police.

Mr. Moss said the two fugitives had remained inside a radius of 2.4 kilometres of the compound, hiding in the isolated hush.

Police early Monday removed enough of the pipe bombs, gasoline containers and other weapons at the site to send in two bloodhounds, who picked up the rebels' scent "almost immediately" and followed it to their hideout 10 minutes later, Mr. Moss said.

After the fugitives shot the dogs, critically wounding both, law agents sent in canine reinforcements and a helicopter.

The fugitives opened fire on both the bloodhounds and the helicopter, killing one of the dogs before one separatist was slain.

"Everyone was very

pleased those dogs were that good," Mr. Moss said, adding that security officials had received sightings of the fugitives "from all over the country."

"Republic of Texas" leader Richard McLaren and his wife Evelyn were indicted on bank fraud and conspiracy charges, officials said Monday.

The couple, who were among the group holed up in a compound for a week, had been charged in the indictment issued April 29 by a federal grand jury in Dallas.

The indictment, which remained sealed during the six-day standoff, charges the couple with issuing the equivalent of \$1.8 billion in false banking documents.

McLaren, 43, and his 50-year-old wife are being held in a federal prison in Marfa, Texas.

McVeigh's sister says accused bomber transported explosives

DENVER, Colorado (AFP) — The sister of accused Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh testified Monday that her brother wore a disguise, used an alias and transported up to 1,000 pounds of explosives in the months before the blast.

Jennifer McVeigh, 23, told the court she did not ever ask him to explain his actions.

"I don't think I wanted to know," she said. Her testimony, given under a prosecution immunity agreement, dramatically started the second week of the trial on the attack on the Alfred P. Murrah building which killed 168 people and injured more than 600.

Mr. McVeigh, 29, is one of two men charged in the April 19, 1995 explosion, the worst case of domestic terrorism in U.S. history.

Jennifer McVeigh read from letters her brother wrote to her in which he warned her to use pay phones because he feared wiretaps. He also told her she might never see him again.

In the last conversation they had before the bombing, "he indicated he was not in the propaganda stage, which was like passing out papers," Jennifer McVeigh testified.

"He was now in the actions stage," she said. Jennifer McVeigh was the second key prosecution witness to testify that she knew of the defendant's potential involvement in a bombing plot and did nothing to stop it.

Last week, Lori Fortier, also under immunity from prosecution, testified that Mr. McVeigh told her in graphic detail of his plan to bomb the Oklahoma City federal building.

Zairean rebels ask government troops to surrender

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (R) — Zairean rebels appealed Tuesday for government troops to surrender to their approaching forces to avert a bloody takeover of the capital.

With Laurent Kabila's rebels reported less than 85 kilometres from the usually teeming city of five million people and ailing Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko refusing to step down, fear and apprehension gripped the capital.

A regional military source said government troops had gone on a rampage of looting around Mr. Mobutu's Jungle Palace in his ancestral village of Gbadolite near the border with Central

African Republic.

There was no corroboration of the looting, which has frequently preceded the flight of soldiers in the face of advancing rebels.

The surrender appeal by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire said rebels had set up centres to receive government troops and would not harm those willing to turn themselves in.

The broadcast by voice of the people radio in Lubumbashi said: "We appeal to all government soldiers in Kinshasa to leave and present themselves to alliance commanders and troops."

"A surrender is important because it will avoid blood-

shed in Kinshasa," said the statement issued in the name of the rebel military high command.

The rebels, led by Laurent Kabila, say they are closing in on the teeming capital and could be there in the next day or two. Mr. Kabila had appealed to Mr. Mobutu to give up power and prevent a bloody battle for Kinshasa.

Residents in the city were slow to venture onto the normally busy streets. In the commercial district scores of people, hungry for the latest news, clustered around newspaper vendors — avidly reading newspapers spread on the ground.

Many Kinshasa residents

openly welcome the prospect of Mr. Kabila's arrival but fear Mobutu's soldiers will again loot and pillage before fleeing.

Newspapers predicted the imminent arrival of Mr. Kabila but, with Mr. Mobutu giving no public indication of leaving office, some hinted at difficult times if he opted to fight.

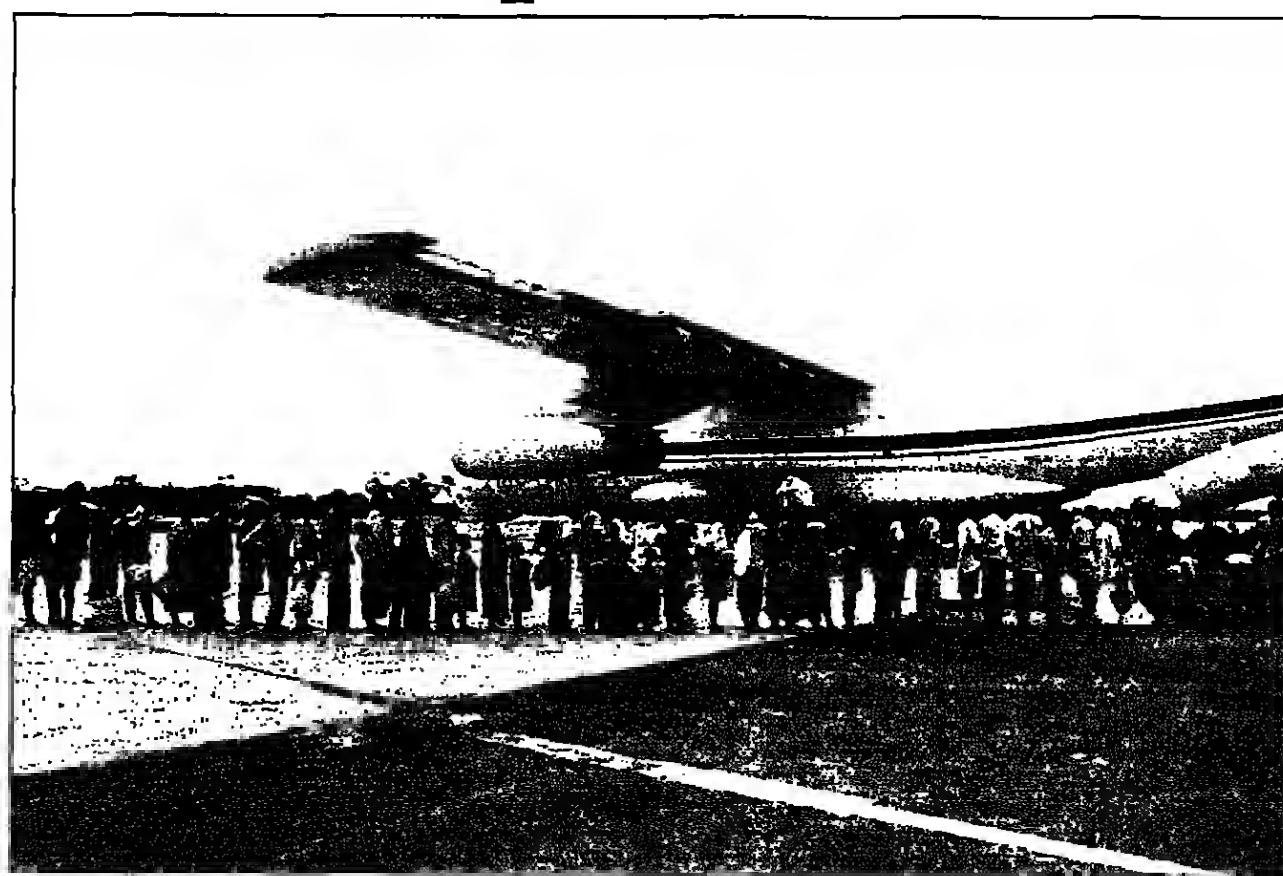
However, the U.S. Cable News Network (CNN) reported from Kinshasa that Mr. Mobutu will leave for Gabon's capital Libreville Wednesday, although he intends to return.

Mr. Mobutu would leave under the pretext of attending a Great Lake regional summit, CNN said, quoting Western diplomats in Kinshasa. Mr. Mobutu reportedly intends to return Friday but the network said the trip was apparently part of a deal to allow Mr. Kabila to take power.

Anonymous pamphlets distributed in Kinshasa Monday urged support for the rebels and called on the people of the capital to wear white scarves as a sign of solidarity with them. But with Mr. Mobutu and his feared Presidential Guard still in the city, the once commonplace white scarves were notable by their absence Tuesday.

U.S. officials, who also said it may only be one or two days before the rebels take the capital, were trying to avert a bloodbath in Kinshasa.

U.S. envoy Bill Richardson, who said Monday he was trying to ensure a "soft landing," met Ugandan Leader Yoweri Museveni and Zimbabwe President Robert



Rwandan refugees queue up to be airlifted by the U.N. from Kisangani. Thousands of Rwandan refugees are leaving everyday for Rwanda which they fled during the 1994 genocide (Reuter photo)

Mugabe in the Botswana border town of Kasane Tuesday.

He was to fly to Cape Town later in the day to see South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who is also playing a central role in diplomatic efforts to engineer a peaceful end to Mr. Mobutu's era.

Meanwhile, a senior U.S. administration official said Monday President Mobutu never clearly stated to U.S. President Bill Clinton his intention to resign.

Denying a report in Sunday's New York Times asserting that Mr. Mobutu told

Mr. Clinton in a letter that he would resign, the official said: "I don't believe President Mobutu has said that he was going to step aside."

He added that the letter Mr. Mobutu handed to U.S. envoy Bill Richardson was "ambiguous," and the Zairean leader "did not clearly express his intentions."

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Sadako Ogata Monday appealed to Zairean rebels to provide U.N. workers with access to Rwandan refugees to prevent further deaths during a repatriation operation.

In a statement issued here,

Mrs. Ogata said she was "deeply shocked" by the death of 91 Rwandan refugees who were suffocated or crushed to death during a train journey Sunday to a transit centre in Kisangani, eastern Zaire.

"I again call on the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire to ensure that the UNHCR is given full and unconditional access to the refugees, and to cooperate fully and coordinate with the humanitarian agencies in the operations," said Mrs. Ogata.

Following Sunday's inci-

dent, the UNHCR suspended the train operation and trucks were to be used to bring the mainly Hutu refugees to Kisangani from the Biaro camp some 40 kilometres to the south. The refugees are being airlifted to Rwanda.

But U.N. spokesman Juan Carlos Brandt accused the Tutsi rebels of treating the refugees worse than animals, by cramming more than 100 into trucks meant to hold 50 people.

Mr. Brandt appealed to the rebels to allow the UNHCR to take control of the operation.



Three Rwandan refugee children who are without any Rwandan address wait for a plane in Kisangani. Three hundred orphans and minors have already returned to Rwanda in a U.N. airlift that will see more than 40,000 Rwandan refugees repatriated (Reuter photo)

Battle heats up for Britain's Conservative party leadership

LONDON (AFP) — Another vocal Eurosceptic and former minister joined the battle for leadership of Britain's decimated Conservative Party Tuesday as the race shaped up around the same divisive issue of European integration that cost the party's electoral drubbing last week.

John Redwood, who quit the cabinet as Welsh secretary two years ago in an unsuccessful leadership challenge to Prime Minister John Major, looked set to fight an "I-told-you-so" campaign.

Mr. Redwood at that time had severely criticised Mr. Major for not taking a tough enough line on Europe and predicted the inclination toward closer European integration would cost the Conservatives the election.

He told the BBC Tuesday he would have threatened to pull out of the European Union's (EU) common fisheries policy and seize control of British fishing back from Brussels if the EU had failed to make concessions to British fishermen.

"I would have gone to the European community and said we did need a better deal and I would have dug in on certain things before

making any further progress or any further concessions," he said.

"I did try to warn the party in 1995 when I thought we still had time to pull it back," he said. "I said then that we needed a clearer line on Europe. I think all those things would have helped."

He joined a leadership contest that already included former Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke, a vocal Europhile, and former Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley, a leading Eurosceptic.

Mr. Clarke earlier blamed the Tories' "appalling disunity" over Europe... a cancer at the heart of the party, for their devastating defeat to Labour.

"The troubles of the past years have entirely been caused by Europe," he said. "Some people are obsessed by it, quite incapable of agreeing about it."

Former Home Secretary Michael Howard, a more moderate Eurosceptic, was also expected to throw his hat in the ring later Tuesday.

Former Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell and former Welsh Secretary William Hague and former Education Secretary Gillian Shephard were also being coun-

ted as possible candidates.

Several obvious contenders for the leadership were swept away in Labour's landslide, including former Defence Secretary Michael Portillo and former Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, who lost their seats in the House of Commons.

Former Deputy Premier Michael Heseltine, dropped out after a recurring bout of heart trouble, and Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten — a former party chairman — excluded himself as a contender.

Despite the divisions over Europe which look set to characterise the leadership contest, Mr. Redwood claimed he could unify a Tory party in opposition to Labour's European policies.

And he said he would, if elected leader by the 165 remaining Tory MPs, would include Mr. Clarke in his shadow cabinet. Nearly two-thirds of those are considered Eurosceptic to some degree.

"It must be inclusive and it's going to be much easier to keep us all together in opposition to a Labour government making lots of mistakes in its European policy," Mr. Redwood said.

MIA groups skeptical about talks with North Koreans

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Americans pressing for information about missing U.S. soldiers welcomed news Monday of an unprecedented meeting with North Korean officials but said they expected no breakthroughs.

"It's an important first step," said Donna Knox of Roanoke, Virginia, who chairs the Korean/Cold War Family Association of the Missing.

Ms. Knox has tried for 45 years to find out what happened to her father, a radar engineer who went down with a B-26 plane over China in January 1952.

She is to join up to 20 other Americans whose relatives went missing in Action (MIA) in the 1950-53 Korean War for talks in New York, probably Friday, with North Korean officials.

The meeting, following several days of U.S.-North Korean MIA talks in New York, will be Ms. Knox's first face-to-face encounter with officials from the isolated Stalinist country, now suffering devastating food shortages.

"It's a first opportunity to ask about him," Ms. Knox said Monday after the meeting was announced. "We want some answers. We want a full accounting."

Ms. Knox said she received Pentagon assurances that she will be able to ask any question she wishes to pose, unlike an earlier meeting with Russian officials at which participants submitted questions in advance.

But she added that she didn't know what to expect from the North Koreans, who "have been known to make promises and then go back on them."

Dolores Alfond, chairwoman of the National Alliance of Families in Seattle, Washington, hoped Washington would offer Pyongyang a deal: Food aid for prisoners, or for information about Americans who died in captivity.

Colombia says Habitat must root out inefficiency

NAIROBI (R) — Colombian President Ernesto Samper Pizano called Monday for action to end inefficiency at the Nairobi-based U.N. Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) but objected to suggestions it may have outlived its usefulness.

"I am worried about the Habitat situation," Mr. Samper, chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, told an annual session of the U.N. Commission for Human Settlements.

"There are inefficiencies and problems with bureaucracy. The conclusion should not be doing away with the organisation, but urgent solutions to the problems," he said. "If you have a sick man, the obvious solution is not to chop off a hand."

A separate report commissioned by Uganda, South Africa, Denmark and the

Netherlands into Habitat also spoke of problems in management, especially regarding financial resources.

The report by the U.N. Office of Internal Oversight Services led by Karl Paschke of Germany said Habitat had few financial controls, hired unnecessary consultants, assigned staff to tasks they did not perform and functioned in a muddled organisational and policy structure.

Mr. N'Dow said in a statement Sunday his action plan aimed at more efficient fund-raising, tighter control of spending and a more efficient and transparent financial reporting system.

He said it provided for restructuring Habitat, which is responsible within the U.N. system for improve-

ment of all aspects of housing, especially in the developing world.

Mr. Samper said part of the problem, with Habitat as a shortage in funding for social programmes, which the U.N. system had ignored to concentrate on questions such as peace-keeping.

But Mr. Samper said that Habitat needed to define concrete ways of improving its standing and to end rhetoric that placed its programmes beyond ordinary people. He said Habitat must "put its feet down, no longer in the Utopia, no longer on the moon."

The Habitat centre was set up after the first U.N. Conference on Human Settlements, in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976.

Patten shrugs off China's barrage of insults

LONDON (AFP) — The last British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, has not lost a wink of sleep over insults heaped on him over his treatment of the colony's handover to China, he revealed in Tuesday's edition of Harpers and Queen, an upmarket British magazine.

The former Conservative Party chairman claimed the fortnight Chinese barbs — ranging from "a triple violator" to "a whore who opened her legs for Clinton" — were preferable to more underhand British machinations.

"I'll tell you this: It's always more tiresome to hear the cutlery behind your shoulders. There's a particular English style about being malicious which is rather unattractive," he told Harpers and Queen.

The former Bath MP, who spectacularly lost his seat at the 1992 general election as

he helped his party to victory, also said he could not understand the Chinese preoccupation with losing face following his own defeat.

"The whole concept of face is a puzzle. I recognise it exists, but I'm slightly alarmed when people think it might affect me as well," he said.

"I remember saying to Lu Ping, China's director of Hong Kong and Macau affairs, that I was a senior member of my party — chairman of my party — who'd been defeated in a general election.

"He really mustn't think that issues of face were ever likely to affect my attitude towards events."

Mr. Patten, 53, added he accepted the Hong Kong position since he "hated the idea of being a sort of wallflower of British politics."

And I knew it would be terribly exciting to be in Hong Kong at a time which

many people would regard, probably wrongly, as a climactic moment at the end of the empire."

He admitted the initial months of his governorship were problematic.

"It was quite a tough period, the autumn of 1992. The prime minister phoned up and said, 'do you want to come home?' but it never occurred to me that I wouldn't see things through."

But he divulged he once thought of quitting in the run-up to the election for a new legislative council — the most democratic to take place in Hong Kong — in the autumn of 1995.

"It crossed my mind on the run-up to vote on our electoral proposals that it might be pretty difficult if we lost," he said.

Mr. Patten, who will leave the colony on June 30, hopes to spend the winter and spring writing at his home in France.

He is adamant the work would not be a political memoir about Hong Kong — "that would be pretty boring" — but a discussion of issues such as Asian values and the relationship between economic growth and the law.

But he refused to speculate about his career beyond the spring of 1998.

Last spring, John Major came close to nominating him as his preferred successor when he described him as one of a "number of colleagues with outstanding ability who would have a legitimate claim to be a leader of the Conservative Party and prime minister."

Mr. Patten has ruled out standing for the succession to Mr. Major, who announced his resignation as party leader following the Conservatives' trouncing by Labour in general elections on May 1.

U.S. offers Mexico \$6m for drug war

MEXICO CITY (R) — The United States promised Mexico new funds Monday to help fight drug smuggling as the two countries played down differences over the issues that threaten to cloud this week's visit by President Bill Clinton.

The State Department said Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and her Mexican counterpart, Jose Angel Gurría, agreed to seek a way out of a dispute over whether U.S. drug enforcement agents can carry weapons in Mexico.

Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said that in a meeting after an annual session of cabinet ministers from both countries, Ms. Albright told Mr. Gurría Washington would extend \$6 million to Mexico to help train counter-narcotics agents.

New agents needed to be recruited to replace others fired in an anti-corruption purge by the Mexican government, Mr. Burns told reporters before Mr. Clinton arrived in Mexico City for a two-day visit.

He described the aid as "new money, immediately available," and said Mr. Gurría had gratefully accepted it. U.S. officials said it came from State Department contingency funds.

Mr. Burns reported no agreement on whether U.S. agents could bear arms in Mexico, one of several drug issues that have vexed Washington's ties with its southern neighbour. Mexico is the transit country for most of the

cocaine reaching the United States.

Mr. Gurría repeated last week's refusal by Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo to permit this, but Mr. Burns said Mr. Gurría and Ms. Albright "agreed a way had to be found to ensure the safety of Americans" operating against drugs in Mexico.

"We have not agreed on specific ways to do that," Mr. Burns said. "But Mr. Gurría specifically said he wants the DEA (U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration) in Mexico and he wants them (agents) to be safe."

Ms. Albright earlier stressed at a news conference that drugs "have to be dealt with cooperatively," while Mr. Gurría, in a speech to a bilateral commission grouping U.S. and Mexican cabinet members called for an end to counter-narcotics frictions.

Mexico has criticised the White House's policy of "certifying," or publicly judging, the anti-drug efforts of countries around the world — a policy sensitive in Mexico this year because its performance was criticised.

Ms. Albright, addressing the commission, applauded Mexico's measures to crack down on drugs and praised Mr. Zedillo as a "determined partner" in the anti-narcotics battle.

She praised steps to stamp out money laundering and ease extradition of traffickers. But, she said, "we must follow up on last year's high narcotics seizure rates by intensifying joint operations and putting major traffickers behind bars."

Grand finale to mark handover of Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — The grand finale marking the historic handover of the British colony of Hong Kong to China will last for about 45 minutes, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

More than 4,000 invited guests will attend the finale in the Grand Hall of Hong Kong's new Convention and Exhibition Centre, which will begin at around 11:30 p.m. (0330 GMT) on June 30, Xinhua reported from Beijing Monday.

More than 150 years of British rule draws to a close at midnight after which Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region of China (SAR).

As the midnight deadline approaches, the British flag and the colonial Hong Kong flag will be lowered slowly.

"At midnight, the Chinese national flag and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region flag will be hoisted," Xinhua added.

The VIPs attending the formal ceremony will enjoy a banquet

hosted by the outgoing British authorities ahead of the flag change and afterwards will be feted by the incoming sovereign at a reception.

A few hours later as dawn breaks on Tuesday, July 1, the Chinese army will begin deployments across the border into Hong Kong in a public display of the resumption of Chinese sovereignty over the wealthy community of 6.4 million people.

An advance guard arrived late last month to prepare the way. At 10 a.m. (0200 GMT) on July 1, the new Hong Kong SAR government, led by shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa, is to be inaugurated at the Hong Kong coliseum on the Kowloon peninsula.

The final countdown has been bumpy, with Britain and China often at loggerheads over transitional issues, including the nature of handover ceremonies. Relations were so cool at one point that many feared the two would hold separate ceremonies.

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Hoping against intransigence

THE CONCEPT of soft security advocated by the Jordanian leadership seems to be eluding the Israeli prime minister and his administration.

Soft security could have been a timely description of what was supposed to have been secured in conjunction with the inauguration of the peace park on Peace Island between Jordan and Israel. Jordan had hoped that the ceremony at Baqoura would be crowned by a water deal in accordance with the terms of the peace treaty of October 26, 1994. That not being the case, Jordan pulled out of the ceremony. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the cancellation of the meeting between himself and HRH Crown Prince Hassan as "a mini-crisis caused by a misunderstanding and a disagreement between the two countries." Hardly. Quite simply, Israel's refusal, or at best procrastination on its commitment to supply Jordan with additional water is a breach of the peace treaty. Israel may say it is committed to the peace treaty, but all evidence points to a commitment that stands on Israeli terms only. This will not do, and Jordan will not be blackmailed by such obvious tactics. That message should be clear from the Kingdom's reaction yesterday. The point is that Jordan sees the peace making as a dynamic process that should not be allowed to stagger and fall. The Jordanian leadership will not judge the progress of that process by what happened yesterday. Jordan will continue to have faith in the future, will have patience and will press ahead, through joint endeavours with all the parties to ensure that the peace process will only move forward. There is awareness among all the leaders in the region that people on all sides are still asking to be shown the tangible progress that has been made as a result of the peace process. Jordan had hoped that the peace treaty and the Palestinian-Israeli agreement would have led to improving the quality of life for Jordanians and Palestinians alike. We had hoped that through joint projects, and especially, through the development of the Jordan Valley, the Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis would benefit and the causes of extremism and violence would be removed.

But clearly there seems to be some elements in the Israeli government who see things differently. They do not believe in soft security as being advocated by Jordan. They would rather resort to the arrogance of brute power and opt for hard security. We wonder, therefore, if the Israeli leadership that keeps reiterating its commitment to peace is aware of the dangers inherent in its stalling the implementation of what has been agreed upon with Jordan and the Palestinians.

We, however, have hope in the Israeli people, who in many occasions demonstrated their yearning for peace and coexistence. And we will continue to engage them and seek their help in convincing their leaders that peace cannot be maintained by mere might, but by compromise, accommodation, understanding and, above all, goodwill.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily Tuesday criticised a government decision to allocate tens of millions of dinars to finance a project that would improve the general situation of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, saying that such improvement is bound to establish the camps as districts integrated within Jordanian cities and towns. Faleh Faleh said that while carrying out this project, the government claims that it is not aimed at settling the refugees permanently in the Kingdom, but the result of this improvement clearly means the opposite, especially as these refugees are considered now Jordanian citizens. If the government is executing a plan for settling the refugees in Jordan, it has to declare openly this policy so as to attract financing from various world donors. These donors will be offering assistance not because of their concern over the refugees, but rather to help solve Israel's problem since this would remove a burden from Israel's shoulders, said the writer. He said that the government's claim that the project is not for settling the refugees is only used for local consumption, but, he added, this claim will deprive the country of the prospect of receiving donations, burden the Jordanian treasury with the cost and deprive the refugees of the right to return.

A WRITER for Al Dustour warned the Arabs against the emerging Israeli-Turkish alliance, saying that it is directed against Arab interests. Urging Arab states to reappraise their relations with Ankara in view of its close ties with the Jewish state, Oreib Rintawi noted that Ankara and Tel Aviv have, over the past 15 months, concluded three agreements. He said the first agreement was on free trade, exempting all exchanged goods from customs duty, the second was on military industrial cooperation and the third on the exchange of military information and conducting joint military exercises. To crown all this, said the writer, Israel and Turkey are now preparing for major military exercises, in cooperation with the U.S., at a time when Israeli leaders openly say that the new alliance is directed against Syria, Iran, Iraq and international terrorism, which they accuse the three countries of harbouring and encouraging.

The Washington Watch

Arab American's volunteerism — 'the hope for a bright new future for our people in the U.S. and the Arab World'

By Dr. James Zogby

THIS WEEK, President Bill Clinton led a three-day summit meeting on volunteerism that focused national attention on the work that volunteers do in the United States. Former presidents George Bush and Gerald Ford, Nancy Reagan and General Colin Powell were among the luminaries who gathered in Philadelphia to praise and promote volunteerism.

Experts estimate that approximately 93 million Americans volunteer their time every year, spending over 20 billion hours working on behalf of children, the poor, education, and other causes. The specific goal of the summit was to increase volunteer efforts to assist poor children and the conference organisers called for expanded activities in five areas: monitoring, after-school programmes, health care and volunteering by the poor.

It is unclear whether the summit will have a lasting impact, but it has sparked a national political debate about the value of volunteerism. Liberals support volunteerism because they view it as a means of building community and raising awareness of the needs of the poor. Conservatives, who lobby to reduce the size of the government, argue that volunteers can provide the social services that government had in the past. They also believe that volunteering inculcates a sense of personal responsibility in youth.

Studies provide support for both sides, demonstrating that volunteerism does raise the self-esteem of volunteers and builds community. However, in the age of welfare reform and government budget crises, it seems unlikely that increased volunteerism can completely counteract the impact of reduced government spending on programmes for the poor.

An upsurge in volunteerism has taken place in the Arab-American community as well. In the past, Arab Americans, like most new immigrants, were pri-

marily concerned with establishing themselves, their families and their friends in the United States. Family-, village-, and religious-based charities emerged, but these efforts had a limited impact. Twenty years ago, when I came to Washington, there were only four Arab Americans working full-time in the U.S. capital to advance the Arab-American cause.

Efforts to enhance the political stature of the Arab-American community suffered from a dearth of committed activists who were willing to devote themselves to this cause. In fact, from 1950-80, most activists were Arabs studying in the U.S., not Arab Americans.

However, a new generation of young Arab Americans has stepped forward to work on behalf of the Arab-American community. This new energy can be seen everywhere. On college campuses, young Arab Americans have become a dynamic force in student government and local community activism. In California, Cleveland, Detroit and New York, Arab Americans have created social service centres to address the needs of the local Arab-American community.

This new spirit of volunteer activism has manifested itself in international affairs as well. One promising example is the Palestine Peace Project, an "Arab-American Peace Corps," that brings the brightest young Arab Americans to the Arab World to volunteer their services. This summer, the Palestine Peace Project will bring 20 young American lawyers and law students to the West Bank to provide assistance to Palestinian legal institutions and to learn about the situation in Palestine. These lawyers and law students, who will be known as Peace Partners, are primarily young Arab Americans who have chosen to volun-

teer their time in an effort to facilitate the development of the legal system in Palestine.

The Arab-American Peace Partners attend the best law schools in the United States, including, Yale, Harvard, Georgetown and Columbia University. Most law students from these top schools choose to work with private law firms, where they are paid approximately \$1,500 per week. Instead, these students have chosen to work for nothing because they want to help their Arab brothers and sisters in Palestine.

The group is remarkably diverse, including Palestinian Americans, Lebanese Americans, Egyptian Americans, recent immigrants, and first-, second-, and third-generation Americans. Most of them are fluent in Arabic, and some have worked or studied in the Arab World in the past. Many of them are the sons and daughters of immigrants who are seeking to reestablish a connection with the home of their ancestors by working on behalf of the Palestinians.

The individuals participating in the programme have done incredible things in their young lives. They have represented refugees who are seeking political asylum in the United States; joined human rights delegations to El Salvador and the West Bank and Gaza; founded organisations like the North American branch of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association and the Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project; worked for international organisations, like the World Health Organisation and the Organisation of American States, and human rights organisations, like Human Rights Watch and the Mexican-American Legal Defence and Education Fund; taught Arabic at American colleges; and worked for members of Congress.

The programme will provide these talented young Arab Americans with a unique opportunity to assist Palestinians who are struggling to create a democratic society governed by the rule of law. At the same time, they will learn about their heritage and return to the United States as effective ambassadors from the Arab World, able to bridge the gap between the Arab and American cultures.

The Palestine Peace Project will place participants in the programme with a Palestinian legal institution, governmental or non-governmental, where they will work on a variety of legal projects. These institutions include: Al Haq, the Birzeit University Law Centre, the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners, the Palestinian Ministry of Economy and Trade, the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education, the Palestinian Ministry of Justice, the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment, and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling.

I believe that the greatest impact of this programme will come in the future. It will create a network of bright, young Arab-American lawyers who can continue to work on behalf of the Arab-American community.

Every Arab American is proud of the efforts that these young people are making, but I am especially proud because the founder of the Palestine Peace Project is my oldest son Joseph. My son grew up with an awareness of the Palestinian struggle. He remembers when the Palestinian mayors who were deported came to live with our family and when a young refugee who was maimed in the Lebanese war moved in with us.

Joseph is a lawyer who graduated from the University of Virginia Law School, one of the top law schools in the United States. While he was in school, he was the president of the International Human Rights Group and was active with the Arab Student Organisation on campus. He also started a Jewish-Arab student dialogue group that brought Jewish and Arab students together to discuss the Middle East political scene.

During law school, Joseph worked for one summer with the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners, a Palestinian human rights organisation in the West Bank. This experience convinced him that more Arab Americans needed to come to Palestine to assist the Palestinians and learn about the situation first-hand. He realised that no one can fully understand the plight of the Palestinians unless they live for a time in Palestine, cross the Israeli military checkpoints, watch the Israeli settlements grow and speak to Palestinians who have been tortured in Israeli prisons.

When Joseph graduated, the law school presented him with an award in honour of his commitment to public service. He bypassed the opportunity to work for a private law firm because he wanted to use his legal training to assist the Palestinians. He began to recruit young people to travel with him to Palestine. He visited law schools, speaking to law students and young lawyers, spreading the word about his programme. He was thrilled to discover that the new generation of Arab Americans, like himself, are ready and willing to lend a hand.

These 20 young committed individuals, and other young people like them, exhibit the best of volunteerism and represent the hope for a bright new future for our people in the United States and the Arab World.

Algeria: 57 journalists killed in 'unclear' circumstances

REPORTERS SANS Frontières published a 32-page report called "Algeria: Civil war behind closed doors" on March 13, taking stock of the state of press freedom in a country devastated by five years of internal strife. Fifty-seven journalists have been murdered there since 1993, usually in horrifying circumstances. The violence that has hit the country during this civil war "behind closed doors" has taken a heavy toll on the Algerian media because controlling the flow of information is a top priority for the government. Although most of the violence has been claimed by the various armed fundamentalist Muslim groups — who regard journalists as "benchmarks of the government" and "enemies of Islam" — the circumstances of some of the killings have never been clarified and raise many questions.

The security services have never revealed the results of their investigations. The only trials of alleged killers of journalists that have been made public have taken place in the defendants' absence, and no independent observers have been allowed to attend. Some Algerian journalists believe the government may be behind the murders of Tahar Djaout, who was shot dead on May 26, 1993, Said Mekbel, editor of the privately owned daily Le Matin, killed on Dec. 4, 1994, Mohammad Abderrahmani, editor of the government daily El Moudjahid, murdered on March 27, 1995, and Hamid Mahiou of the privately owned daily Liberté, killed on Dec. 2, 1995.

The control of news about

security matters is an essential weapon in the government's struggle to root out "terrorism." On June 7, 1994, the government laid down the boundaries not to be crossed in a decree stamped "Private and Confidential." In practice, it allows censorship of any reports that call official policy into question. Since the electoral process was cancelled in January 1992, there have been 58 cases of newspapers seized, suspended or banned in Algeria. In February 1996, the government clamped down further on the press by setting up official "reading committees" at printing works to check what was being published. But although most newspapers practise self-censorship on many subjects, especially human rights violations by the police and army, this is usually part of a deliberate editorial policy of support for the government.

The state's hold on the press is also reflected in its monopoly on printing works and in its management of state advertising, which is handed out to papers that support the government, thus enabling it to use economic blackmail against the private press.

Finally, with the aim of presenting to its foreign partners the image of a country where peace has been restored, the government tries to extend its stranglehold on news to the international media by restricting the number of visas granted to foreign journalists and by keeping a close watch on their movements in Algeria.

Reporters sans frontières

LETTERS

'Zionism is racist'

To the Editor:

The following appeal to the Swiss authorities was e-mailed to the Jordan Times by the undersigned authors:

WE, WHOSE personal lives have been materially and spiritually affected by the century-old conflict in Palestine, wish to make the following statement regarding the decision of the authorities of the city of Basel, Switzerland, to formally endorse and support the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Zionist movement in their city.

On Nov. 2, 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration. This represented the first major victory for the Zionist project of transforming Palestine from a part of the Ottoman empire into a Jewish state — a project which came to fruition on May 15, 1948, with the proclamation of "the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine."

As a result, the Palestinian people now live either under Zionist rule or in exile. Those in exile are not allowed to return to their homeland because their mother is not Jewish. Those in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 (many of them refugees from areas occupied in 1948), live under continued harsh military rule; those in the territories occupied in 1948 are second-class residents in a Jewish state, denied the rights and privileges accorded to those residents recognised by the state as Jews.

The Jewish state, far from becoming a "light to the nations" has become an armed, ultra-nationalist camp. In its operations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Israel represents a major link in the world network of repressive regimes. Its nuclear weapons capacity, developed in alliance with the South African apartheid, is a danger to the entire Middle East, and to the whole world.

In spite of this, Jewish communities have been recruited by Israel as both support and justification for its activities. The historic suffering of Jews, particularly the Nazi murder of six million European Jews, is held to justify Israel's existence and behaviour. The state of Israel purports to represent the Jewish people in international affairs without any mandate to do so.

On the basis of our principled opposition to colonialism, racism and racial discrimination, and in order to encourage a just, honourable and lasting peace in Palestine/Israel, we kindly remind the Swiss authorities and the city council of Basel, of Switzerland's role towards Jewish victims of Nazi racial discrimination, which makes it a special duty for them to oppose all forms of racism and racial discrimination, including Zionism. We also wish to remind the Swiss authorities that the State of Israel and the Zionist movement do not represent the Jewish people, neither morally nor legally nor in any other way. We urge the city council of Basel to cancel the celebrations of the First Zionist Congress. We remind the University of Basel to uphold recognised academic standards regarding the issue of Zionism. We call on the Swiss government to ensure the enforcement of Swiss federal laws against the dissemination of racist ideologies, including Zionism.

Elias Davidsson, composer, Iceland;
 Naser Aruri, chancellor professor of political science, The University of Massachusetts, North Dartmouth, Mass., U.S.

Joseph Schechla, International Organisation for the Abolition of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Washington, D.C., U.S.;
 Abbas Alnasrawi, professor of economics, University of Vermont, Burlington, U.S.



What a load of rubbish

By Ali Kassay

INDECISION IS a bore. I refer here to the weather's inability to decide whether to behave like spring or winter, which is producing no end to confusion. Even plans in pots, normally adaptable and tolerant creatures who are out so very fastidious about their environment, are showing some signs of disenchantment with climatic vicissitudes.

Still, notwithstanding the last throes of winter, all signs are that we shall be blessed with the usual long stretch of perfect barbecue weather. Summer is also the season when students abroad return home, including two nephews of mine who will join their forces to the one still in Amman, to start a curious game in the household.

You see, their stay in the land of the infidel has filled their heads with peculiar ideas. For instance, they go about stacking their rubbish in neat piles, one for waste paper, another for metal containers, a third one for discarded glass items, a fourth one for plastics, and the last one for organic matter. When they did this last summer, only my knowledge of the ways of the imperialists stopped me from culling the lunatic asylum for a few stout men equipped with nets and straight waistcoats to do their bit.

You see, these stacks are intended to go in separate containers to separate destinations for recycling. Now, the question that presents itself is what to do about it. The obvious course of action would be, to explain to these misguided youth that, in the Third World, we should consider ourselves lucky to have a dustman that collects the refuse. Moreover, we are all the more fortunate that this function is fulfilled by staff recruited from brotherly countries, so there is less fear that they will start forgetting to collect our rubbish if we fail to present them with generous gratuities on the Eid. To present our dustman with several stacks, albeit neatly arranged, would only confuse him.

This course of action was discounted as soon as it had been conceived, because people who spend a long time in the West come back with even more peculiar notions about civil action. They would want to inquire whether there are places earmarked for rubbish that is sorted for recycling, and not, why not, since it would be in the national interest.

Of course this could seem like a worthy pursuit to a young man. But the voice of experience, which will forever form a barrier of communication between the youth and the adult, to the great frustration of both, raises a cautionary note. It asks you whether you remember what happened last time you went to an official bureau for what you assumed would be a straightforward inquiry. It reminds you of the suspicious questions with which you were received, as if you were someone whom the police had been longing to interview for some time in relation to his role in a series of smash-and-grab raids. The wiser plan of action would be to wait until a personage of consequence secures the sole rights to do whatever it is, in this case, recycle refuse, whereupon you will be informed of it by the beffy fine slapped on you for not sorting out your refuse in neat stacks that will make his recycling endeavour possible.

In the meanwhile, what to do about all these neat stacks that pile up? The safest things is to wait until the young conservationists are asleep, whereupon their mother collects their output, surreptitiously mixes it all together, and slips it to the dustman in one bag.

Hungary's Jews work to revive community

By Michael Roddy
Reuters

BUDAPEST — Zsuzsa Biro wants to grow up Jewish in Hungary, embracing Hungarian culture and without fear of the past.

"I went to Israel last year and it is a great country...But young people don't read as much as we do, they don't go to museums or theatres," said Biro, an 18-year-old pupil at the Lauder Javne Jewish community school.

"I want to grow up and have children and I want them to go to Israel to learn Hebrew, but I want them to read and watch theatre and go to museums and I can have that culture here."

Before World War II, Hungary's 800,000 Jews constituted the second largest Jewish community in Central and Eastern Europe after Poland. Today the 80,000 to 100,000 Hungarian Jews, including an estimated 20,000 Holocaust survivors, are by far the biggest Jewish community left in the region.

Late April, after years of debate and wrangling, the Jewish community and the Hungarian government took a major step towards assuring the survival of that community by establishing a Hungarian Jewish heritage foundation, a first for the region.

"This is an historic moment," Gusztav Zoltai, managing director of the Confederation of Jewish Communities in Hungary (Mazsibisz), said at the inaugural meeting.

"But it is unfortunate that this has taken so long because every year 600 to 800 (Hungarian Jews) die and they are all Holocaust survivors."

The foundation, with a 21-member board whose honorary president is U.S. Cosmetics heir Ronald Lauder, benefactor of the Lauder Javne School, has control over four billion forints (\$24 million) in compensation coupons given by the government.

The government also gave several office and embassy buildings in Budapest, and a handful of paintings.

It is a small part of the estimated \$5 billion to \$10 billion that properties confiscated from Hungarian Jews during the war would be worth today, but Peter Feldmajer, the foundation's president, said it is a start.

"You know, Hungary's constitutional court (in 1993) said that 10 per cent of the total value should go back to the Jewish community," Mr. Feldmajer said.

"But there isn't enough money in Hungary or the world to pay for it. So today we will start in this condition, and after tomorrow, or 10 years from now, there will be the next step."

One of the foundation's first acts will be setting up supplemental government pensions for Holocaust survivors, many of whom are desperately poor and have waited for decades to receive anything beyond standard pensions of about \$100 a month.

The supplements are expected to amount to only \$30 a month on average, but will make a big difference, heritage foundation officials said.

"Many people believe that the Jewish people in Hungary are very rich but I have been working with them for three or four years...And it was a surprise to me how many people are living in deep, deep poverty," said physician Imre Hutás, a member of the heritage foundation's governing board.

"These are mostly

women and old people and they need the money."

Mr. Hutás said the main reason for the delay in setting up the supplemental pensions was that "the government feared what the non-Jewish people would think and the general public opinion."

But Mr. Feldmajer said another factor was internal debate between Jews who wanted to rebuild Hungary's Jewish community and those who think it is futile.

"If you believe that Jews can have a future outside of Israel, then you can make a foundation like this to rebuild the Jewish community in Hungary," he said.

"But if you think that just Israel is the real Jewish life, and that is the future of the Jewish people, then why do you make a foundation here? Why do you build synagogues and schools? That was the root of the debate."

But following five decades of stagnation under post-war Communist rule, Jewish life is slowly reviving in Hungary, and the heritage foundation is expected to give it an extra push.

Often with funds from the United States, Canada or Israel, synagogues have been restored and reopened in several cities. Budapest now has three Jewish schools.

Last year the 138-year-old Dohányi Utca Synagogue, the world's second largest, was reopened after being restored from serious bomb damage during the war.

At the same time, anti-Semitism remains a significant undercurrent in Hungarian life.

At least one grenade has exploded near the Dohányi Utca Synagogue in the past year, causing little or no damage. Security at the synagogue is tight, with armed guards and metal detectors. The Jewish schools have tight security as well.

"It is much more than normal (Hungarian) schools," said Anna Szeszler, general director of Lauder Javne. "But we don't want the kids to feel they are different. It is a balance between making them feel they are in a ghetto, or more important than other kids in Hungary."

Bence Sarkadi, another 18-year-old Lauder Javne pupil, said he encounters anti-Semitism in his daily life, but thinks it is important to fight it.

"I was travelling by train and the conductor said something was wrong with my ticket and asked to see my student identity card, which has a menorah (candelabra) on it," Sarkadi said.

"But when she saw the card she said, 'well, you've got enough problems' and walked away," he said. "That was very shocking to me...I don't feel myself having problems...But some people think that being Jewish is a problem."

Mr. Feldmajer said that before the war, Hungary's Jews were far more integrated into society than Jewish communities in other countries, which is why today Hungarian Jews want to stay here.

"I hope we can rebuild Jewish life but it will not be like it was," he said. "In every place in Hungary there were Jews, in every town and village a Jewish community."

"Today the Jews are not even one percent and there are some counties in Hungary with no Jews at all. So it's not just a religious thing. Our role will not be so important as it was."

Internet — risky area for health advice

WASHINGTON (AP) — Using the Internet as an exercise adviser can give you tips from a world-renowned physician or a famous trainer. Or a snake oil salesman or an eccentric stranger.

The Internet has no quality control, so separating the good information from the bad is up to you.

"Information on the Internet is subject to the same rules and regulations as conversation at a bar," said Dr. George D. Lundberg, editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). "It may be very valid; it may be utter trash."

JAMA will run an editorial in its April 16 edition on standards for information on websites.

The JAMA has its own website (www.Ama-assn.org).

So it's not that Dr. Lundberg thinks net usage is necessarily bad for your health. But he and other experts caution that the Internet makes it easy for anyone to offer an opinion, wise or otherwise.

"The Internet is the

world's largest vanity press," Dr. Lundberg said. A nice layout may not mean good content; glittering websites don't always deliver gold, said Mary Jo Deering, director of Health Communications and Telehealth for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Some people make the opposite

assumption: if it's glitzy, it's probably selling something," she said.

Users need to show the same scepticism on the Internet that they would on other consumer matters.

"The biggest thing is, 'who's putting it on?'" said Dr. Dave Jenkinson of the University of Pittsburgh. "If someone is

coming up with a position, do they have the research to back it up, and is the research credible?"

Dr. Jenkinson runs two Internet operations. One is a website that is still in testing; the other is a list-serve, which is a text-based bulletin board on which researchers and others interested in sports medicine exchange ideas.

Artificial nose may be able to sniff out land mines

MEDFORD, Mass. — Roughly 120 million land mines are scattered throughout the world and are responsible for maiming or killing 24,000 people each year. Many of those injured are civilian adults or children in Third World countries, where farms and fields were transformed into battle-grounds.

Vietnam has 3.5 million mines, Cambodia 10 million, and Bosnia and Croatia have a total of 12 million.

Getting rid of land mines is expensive and risky. According to the International Red Cross, one demolition specialist is killed and two injured for every 500 mines that are removed.

A group of researchers at Tufts University is hoping that the artificial "nose" they developed can be used to sniff out land mines, reducing the toll they have on human lives.

John S. Kauer, professor

of neuroscience and of anatomy and cellular biology at Tufts School of Medicine and principal investigator on the project, and chemistry professor David Walt have been awarded a \$2.6 million grant from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Administration (DARPA). The project's goal is to refine the artificial nose so it could detect the low concentration of TNT often left on the surface of a land mine. Land mines are made and stored in large quantities. Because TNT is sticky, it frequently contaminates the outside of the mines.

"These horrible little things are about the size of a large tuna fish can," Prof. Kauer said. "They are encased in plastic and are hermetically sealed but are contaminated by the explosive on the outside. The mines are about two inches under the soil and are pressure-activated. If someone steps on

them, that triggers the explosion. The loss of life and loss of limbs is just awful."

"Not only are kids getting their legs blown off and people getting killed, but people in countries where there are large numbers of land mines cannot go back to the agrarian way of living because these fields are now off limits," Prof. Kauer said. "So if we could find mines with 100 per cent accuracy, we could save life and limb and allow people to go back to farming."

The artificial nose professors Kauer and Walt invented operates on computer technology and chemical sensors and is based on knowledge gleaned over the years from work on the olfactory system. Using Prof. Walt's knowledge of sensors and Prof. Kauer's knowledge of neurological networks, they have created a device that functions at a high level,

although it is not yet as discriminating as a dog's nose.

A major part of our work will be studying the biological olfactory system and how it deals with low concentration signals," Prof. Kauer said. "The odours of land mines are low concentration, so one has to have an extremely sensitive device. We know dogs can do this; we are trying to learn from the biology to extend the sensitivity of the artificial system."

The artificial nose is based on technology in which sensing chemistries are deposited on the ends of the optical fibers. "The fiber length could be a kilometre," Prof. Kauer said. "The sensing device — the part out there in the field sniffing — can be moved by an autonomous vehicle or some sort of robot, and the detecting end can be on safe territory so it could be used at a distance. You could go out in

a dangerous area and if the 'nose' is damaged, just put out another one. But you don't lose the computer and the optics; all you lose is the fibre."

"More important," Prof. Kauer said, "you don't lose a person."

Prof. Walt said the concentrations of material the artificial nose can now sense are in the several parts per million range for some substances. What's needed to detect land mines is to find material in the parts per billion or even trillion range.

"Consequently we have our work cut out for us to find chemistries and analytical circuits that have the sensitivity to detect the residues from land mines at the low concentrations that are present in real-world environments," Prof. Walt said.

Another challenge the researchers face is that the nose will have to find the smell of the residue in a context of other smells. There may be flowers

growing nearby, or a fuel spill may have occurred, or there could be factories emitting odours or car exhaust fumes. "Those materials are present at much higher concentrations than the materials we're trying to detect from land mines buried below the surface of the ground," Prof. Walt said.

In addition to professors Kauer and Walt, other Tufts researchers working on the project are Barbara Talamo, professor and chairwoman of neuroscience at Tufts Medical School; Timothy J. Turner, research assistant professor of physiology; and Joel E. White, research assistant professor of neuroscience. Todd Dickinson, a graduate student in chemistry, also contributed to the development of the artificial nose.

E-mail: MarjorieHoward@Infonet.Tufts.edu

Scans might soon replace passports at airport controls

By Michael Durham
and Robin McKie

PASSPORTS COULD soon become things of the past with the introduction of scanners that can identify individuals from their hands.

The first devices will soon be used to cut immigration queues at Bermuda airport. The developer, IBM, expects to introduce the scanners at airports around the world in the next few years.

Called hand-geometry scanners, the devices are part of a revolution in the science of biometrics, in which a person's biological characteristics — iris patterns, voice patterns or fingerprints — are turned into digital data that can identify them precisely.

Developed as a security measure for banks and credit card companies, biometrics scanners are

likely to have a dramatic impact on everyday life in the next few years. In Britain, BT is planning to create a database of iris scans that would enable individuals to be recognised by their "eye prints". For instance, they could be given cash or provided with phone calls. Iriscan, an American company, has already provided such devices to a Japanese bank for its cash machines.

Similarly, Keyware Technologies from Boston is to launch a voice-recognition system which will allow PC users to make financial transactions on the Internet without fear of being intercepted and defrauded.

"We are on the brink of some very important developments," said Jeff Mortner, head of IBM's Fastgate project. "Biometrics is going to affect

everyone's lives very soon."

IBM has begun selling its Fastgate service to banks, airlines and other companies that issue credit, executive club, or other cards. The firms will then offer to enrol its customers in the scheme. Once a person is in the scheme, they will arrive at an airport, identify themselves with a passport. A card swipe will then be taken, as well as a hand scan. This data will then be logged on a computer, and used for future identification.

"The next time that person arrives at that airport, he or she will proffer their card, and a hand for scanning, and that will be sufficient to identify them precisely as someone who was acceptable to immigration officials on their last visit. They can then enter the country without

needing to show their passport."

With Fastgate, scanners will survey the length and breadth of a person's hand and fingers, data that offers great precision for identification.

BT believes iris recognition is even more accurate and has invested millions of pounds on systems. These have already been tested at military installations in Britain and America and, according to some reports, are employed in parts of Buckingham Palace.

Now Japanese bank OKI and Citibank in America are planning to use iris scanning at their automated bank machines this year. Barclays has also expressed an interest. A camera inside the machine will record an image of users' eye patterns and check their identity by transmitting

the digitalised image to a central database. This would eliminate the need for a card.

In addition, the company has developed a handheld device, that can be attached to ordinary phones, which would eliminate the need for passwords when customers ring home-banking services. Other uses could include opening a safe, accessing a locked room and turning on a computer.

Doctors are now studying the system to see if it will be more accurate than DNA or dental checks for identifying corpses. "It is extremely accurate," said the system's inventor, Dr. John Daugman of Cambridge University. "You could easily be recognised as one person out of an entire nation with absolute certainty."

The system has obvious benefits for BT, a spokesman said. "If records of iris patterns are kept centrally, it will obviously generate a lot of telephone traffic for BT."

Other companies are planning to use different biometric systems such as Boston's Keyware — which has a voice recognition deal with a major U.S. clearing bank.

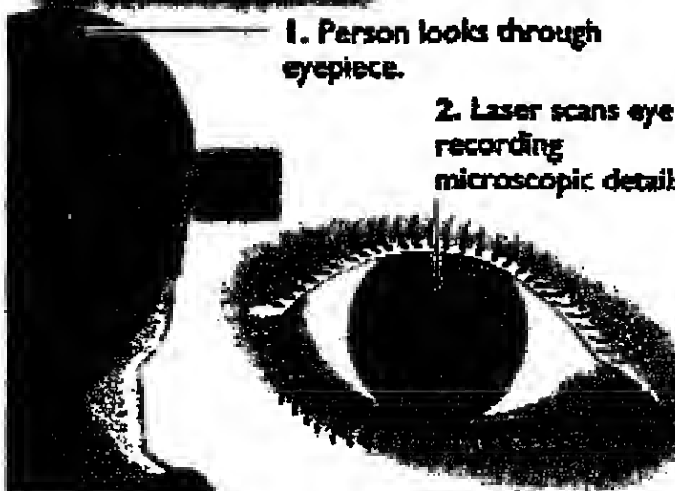
"We will use microphones — now fitted to desktop computers — to record users' voices," said a Keyware spokeswoman. "Digitalised versions could pinpoint individuals with extreme accuracy and provide security for people using credit cards for Internet purchases."

The Observer

No more passports: Technology takes over border controls

Advances in scanning technology mean that fingerprints, hands, faces and even eyes can be digitally scanned and used to form a unique identifying barcode

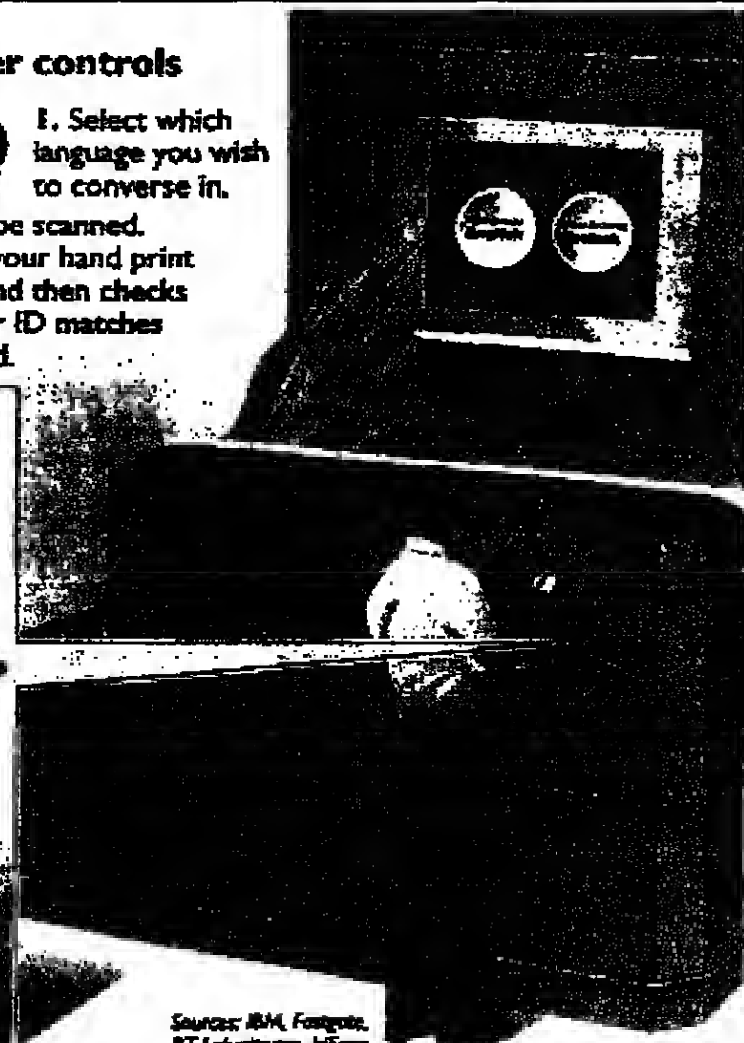
Eye scanning



Hand scanning

1. Select which language you wish to converse in.
2. Insert ordinary credit card into console.
3. Insert hand to be scanned. Database checks your hand print with one on file and then checks to make sure your ID matches that on credit card.

Scanning beam travels over hand, picking up every contour



Sources: IBM, Fastgate, BT Laboratories, Iriscan

Iraqi trade minister charges U.N. Sanctions Committee of rejecting Jordanian contracts

By Ziad Al Shilleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mahdi Saleh Tuesday said the Sanctions Committee has rejected five contracts from Jordan to provide food supplies to Iraq within the oil-for-food deal, noting that the same committee has approved similar contracts with similar prices and specifications from different countries.

port of Aqaba on purpose. He noted that the biggest contract with a French company to supply Iraq with 165,000 tonnes of wheat through Aqaba has been suspended for more than three months now, and has not been approved yet by the Sanctions Committee. The committee has approved contracts for the supply of food items to Iraq worth \$460 million, out of 482 contracts worth \$1.995 million, he pointed out, noting that the Sanctions Committee has a surplus of \$250 million from the oil for food deal, which has not been used.

For more than one month, the Sanctions Committee has only okayed 10 contracts despite the availability of funds for this purpose, the minister indicated. Dr. Saleh stressed the need to expand economic relations with Jordan in all fields and to increase the volume of trade activity to its previous levels, noting that Jordan is a main gateway for Iraqi food imports. On the Jordanian-Iraqi trade protocol, Dr. Saleh said it is being implemented smoothly as scheduled, adding that no problems are encountered in this respect. He emphasised his country's interest in expanding economic relations with Jordan and enhancing them in various economic fields.

The Iraqi minister criticised the United States policy, saying that it tries, through the Sanctions Committee to delay the implementation of contracts in a bid to put pressure on Iraq and to maintain the siege imposed on Iraq since 1990. "The American attempts to delay the implementation of contracts reflect the dirty face of the American policy towards Iraq," Dr. Saleh said, adding that the USA has politicised the food deals. Dr. Saleh called for lifting the siege on Iraq and for implementing paragraph 12 of the United Nations resolution, stressing that Iraq has honoured all its commitments.

Base rate rises to 6.25 per cent

Bank of England wins partial independence

LONDON (AFP) — The new Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown unveiled "the most radical internal reform" to the Bank of England for more than 300 years on Tuesday, when he granted the central bank partial independence.

Mr. Brown also announced that he was raising the British base rate by 0.25 percentage points to 6.25 per cent, in what was seen as a bid to project his self-styled image as the "iron chancellor" and to establish his credibility on the London markets.

"This is the time to take the tough decisions we need for the long-term interests and prosperity of the country," Mr. Brown told reporters. "I will not shrink from the tough decisions needed to deliver stability for long-term growth," he added. Mr. Brown stressed that

further changes would be needed before the Bank of England could be considered as independent. And he insisted that "unlike" that Britain would be among the first wave of countries adopting the European single currency in 1999.

"I am sure that this decision will be supported by people who are against EMU (Economic and Monetary Union) but who are in favour of an independent central bank," he said.

Mr. Brown said that Britain "must break from the short-termism of the past — the economic instability that has characterised the British economy, not just in recent years but for most of this century."

"That is why I want British economic success to be built on the solid rock of prudent and consistent economic management, not the shifting sands of boom and bust. Now is the time for long-termism," he asserted.

The shake-up of British monetary policy was Mr. Brown's first move as chancellor in the light of a resounding Labour election victory last week.

Mr. Brown said that he had decided to give the Bank of England operational responsibility for setting interest rates, with immediate effect.

The government would continue to set a national inflation target and the Bank of England would have responsibility for setting interest rates to meet the target, Mr. Brown said.

Two Magnificent Cello Performances

The National Music Conservatory/Noor Al Hussein Foundation and The Czech Embassy present

CZECH CELLIST JIRI BARTA

with the ORCHESTRA OF THE NATIONAL MUSIC CONSERVATORY
Mohammad Othman Sidiq, conductor

Monday, 12 May 1997 - 8:00 p.m.
The Royal Cultural Center - Main Theatre

Ticket price: JD 5

The National Music Conservatory/Noor Al Hussein Foundation and Instituto Cervantes present

Renowned Spanish Cellist JOSEF BASSAL

Tuesday, 13 May 1997 - 8:00 p.m.
The Royal Cultural Center - Main Theatre

Ticket price: JD 5

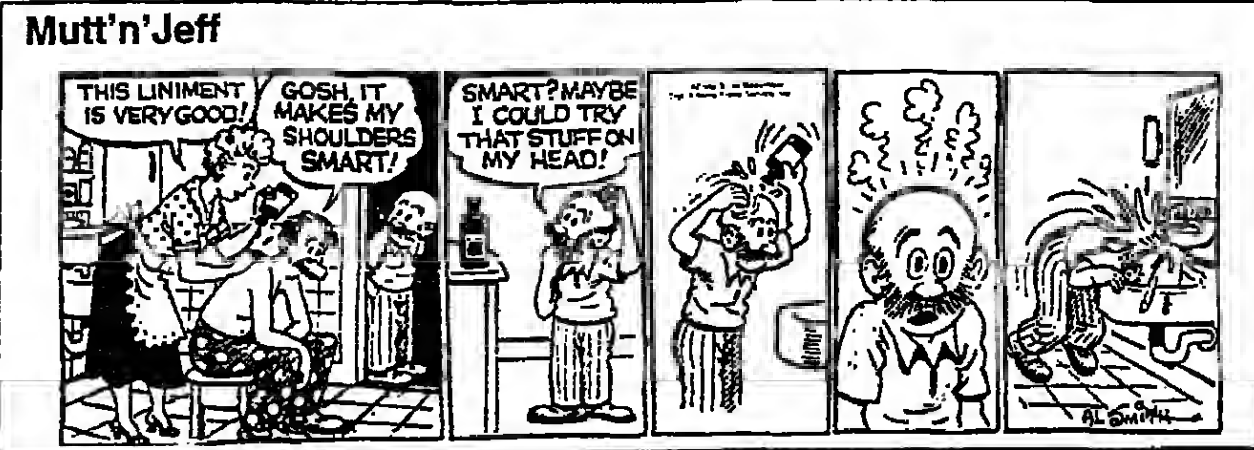
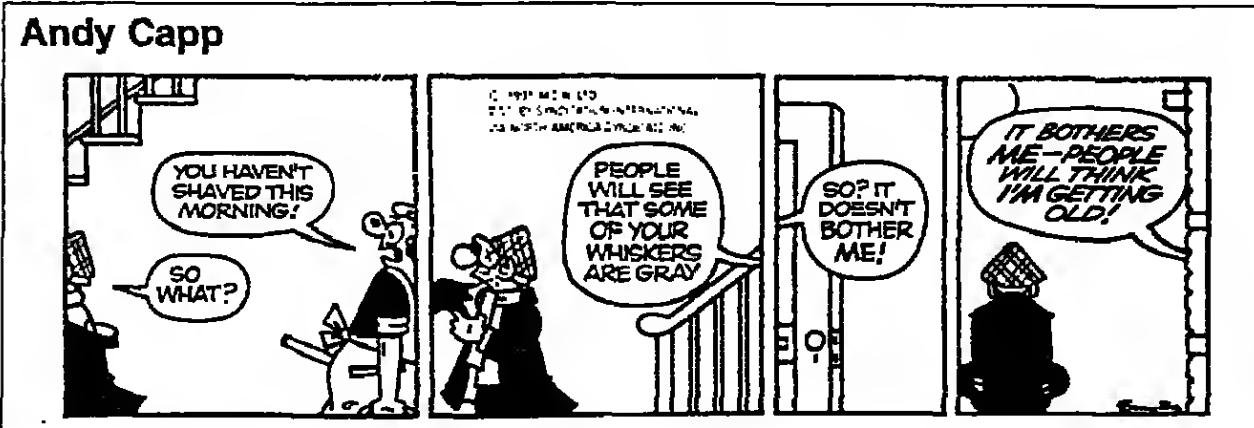
Pieces by Bach, Gabrielli and others.
In cooperation with Radisson SAS Hotel-Amman

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- Alzahr Flowers, tel. 5527695
- Arusana, tel. 647858
- Balcho, tel. 661322
- Café Moka, tel. 856235
- Instituto Cervantes, tel. 610858

Musica Box, tel. 815745
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- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 687620

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REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGN	FRF
US Dollar	1.7220	0.8109	1.4620	125.38	1.3777	1708.50	1.9372	5.8120	
DE Mark	0.5807	-	0.3545	0.8492	72.79	0.7988	990.84	1.1250	3.3752
GB Sterling	1.6368	2.8194	-	2.3832	205.10	2.2550	2792.86	3.1704	9.5119
CH Franc	0.6840	117.87	0.4174	-	55.72	0.9417	1166.12	132.42	3.9700
JP Yen	0.0080	1.3727	0.4358	1.1656	-	1.0984	13.80	154.41	4.6306
CA Dollar	0.7258	1.2378	0.4407	1.0536	1.10	-	1224.78	1.3827	4.1728
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0075	0.3575	0.0856	1363.14	0.8065	-	11.34	3.4001
NL Guilder	0.5162	88.84	0.3151	75.48	64.68	0.7110	880.74	-	2.9973
FR Franc	0.1721	0.2860	0.1050	25.1382	21.55	0.2369	33.30	33.3000	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.8401	0.3040	3.6710	1539.00	3.3895
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2972	0.5324	5.1414	0.4294	5.1850	2173.73	4.7874
GB Sterling	0.2658	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	410.36	0.9038	
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8781	9.9488	-	9.66	0.8064	9.74	4082.55	8.9913
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0303	-	0.8835	1.01	422.79	0.9311	
Kuwait Dinar	3.2895	2.3269	12.3368	1.3400	11.97	-	12.08	5062.50	0.9311
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1928	1.0216	0.1027	0.9916	0.8825	-	419.23	0.9233
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4800	2.4369	0.2449	2.3652	0.1975	2.3863	-	2.2024
Egyptian	0.2850	0.2089	1.1065	0.1112	1.0740	0.0897	1.0831	454.06	-

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
Brent	18.20 18.10	SA Riyal	0.2686 0.4693 0.1629 0.39009 33.4448
W. Texa	0.00 19.55	AE Dirham	0.2724 0.48924 0.16643 0.39853 34.1682
Bony	18.20 18.10	KW Dinar	3.2895 5.88572 2.00965 4.81232 41.2541
Dubai	17.25 17.30	BH Dinar	0.3770 4.57038 1.62075 3.88048 332.779
UL Gas	192.00 192.00	CY Pound	1.9454 3.3488 1.1676 2.844 243.938

Metal Prices		Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
Gold (oz's)	342.4 342.3	Period	1-3 Months
Silver (oz's)	4.73 4.75	Cncy	Month
Platinum (oz's)	373.3 374.3	USD	5.53 5.58 5.57 5.57 6.00
AL (3 Months)	1631 1632	GBP	6.06 6.37 6.58 6.56 6.81
CU (3 Months)	2362 2364	JPY	0.40 0.42 0.47 0.59 0.91
Zinc (3 Months)	1278 1279	DEM	2.83 2.84 3.06 3.22 3.12
Lead (3 Months)	826 827	FRF	3.26 3.37 3.46 3.48 3.50
NI (3 Months)	7470 7475	CHF	1.50 1.56 1.62 1.68 1.68
		ITL	6.89 6.78 6.72 6.61 6.59

Main Equity Indices		Value		Chng		High		Low		Pr Cls	
Bourse	Index										
New York	DOW JONES	7250.61	36.12	0.5	7283.83	7193.92	7214.49				
New York	S&P 500	831.16	0.94	0.11	832.29	828.73	830.24				
London	FT-SE 100	4519.3	63.7	1.43	4525.6	4472.9	4455.6				
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20180.92	666.17	3.41	20222.5	19616.8	19514.6				
Paris	CAC 40	2851.93	-20.91	-0.78	2885.67	2840.47	2872.84				
Frankfurt	DAX	3566.26	39.5	1.12	3584.56	3558.28	3528.78				

Energy		JOD Cross Rates	
Coffee (c/lbs)	241.5	Currency	Buy
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1403	US Dollar	0.708 0.710
Sugar (\$/ton)	317.4	GB Sterling	1.1465 1.1522
Wheat (\$/ton)	180	DE Mark	0.4091 0.4111
Soya (c/lbs)	24.71	CH Franc	0.4804 0.4826
Tea (stg/kg)	152	FR Franc	0.1212 0.1216
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	JP Yen	0.5666 0.5634
Rice (\$/ton)	480	NL Guilder	0.3637 0.3655
		IT Lira	0.4136 0.4157

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Smart
- Fetish
- Reps.
- Golfed's Palmer
- Certain star
- Kingston —
- Take dangerous chances
- Suit to —
- Plaines
- Titillates
- Elko's state: abbr.
- Pronoun
- British one
- Flightless birds
- Home for the herd
- Swell
- "Lou Grant" actor
- Beginning
- Bull; Sp.
- Gel even
- Pine
- Like a quidnunc
- Arterity
- Ultimate
- Actress
- Thompson
- Essence
- Overhangs
- stop
- Direction letters
- Toile
- Fleming
- To — (everyone)
- Allow little time
- Stadium section
- Shower of TV
- Certain vessel
- Faults
- Gainsay
- Muscle problem

DOWN

- Clear wrap
- Overused
- Blissful
- Victory goddess
- Congest
- Gather
- Performs
- Eggs
- Wise — owl
- Splinter group
- Destines
- Binge
- Tangled
- Pert Girl
- Certain times
- Brooches
- Declares
- Scapegoat
- Vaults
- Admission
- NCOs
- 52 53

by Roger Jurgovan

ABATE	SCAM	MACS
LATER	ORCA	ILIE
ENTRE	FAR	SALE
CAIRRY	ABIG	STICK
ETA	DOUR	
SPT	OID	TRIAGE
ALA	MUSIC	EASEL
CARRYING	COALSTO	
HIOEO	TINAS	EMP
STIEPPE	TYR	TIE
AIINT	EFT	
GETCARRIED	AWAY	
LEAK	HOWA	RIVAL
ARTIE	CPAIS	ACERB
DIYAD	HESIT	DERNS

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson,
Astrologer, Carroll
Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You will be in a very creative mood today, so turn this to your benefit and use your ideas wisely. Make an effort to please your mate more by doing something special or taking him or her to a romantic location.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you entertain some guests at home later this evening, stick to conventional amusements which everyone will enjoy. Try to see your difficulties from another point of view today and thereby you can eliminate any obstacles.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If some good friends ask you to join in a group project today, accept the offer and thereby you can get your career activities completed. Later this evening is a good time to pursue some dream which seemed out of reach.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You will have an opportunity to improve your financial situation today, however, don't rush into anything. Follow an advisor's suggestions for completing any career activities which you have been given by a bigwig and thereby.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Think carefully as you proceed today, and learn from past experiences. Get together with some good friends for an evening of entertainment and thereby we can have a relaxing time together at recreational activities.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Concentrate on finding some better ways to please your mate today, then follow through with your ideas later this evening and get many fine results. This is a good time to go out on the town with close friends.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Try to make your ambitions more practical and worthwhile today, thereby you can get notice by a bigwig. Think over what your friends expect of you and try to live up to this, so you can gain their respect and admiration.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You can become more successful today, financially and in business, by bringing your abilities to the attention of your superiors. Later this evening would be a good time for you to meet with fellow associates concerning a new project.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can make a few very beneficial contacts today by visiting new places with a good friend. Be clever, however, cautious, while speaking as not to divulge any secret information which is not for everyone's ears.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you get an early start today, you can put over some big deals with and surprisingly little effort. Later this evening will be good for you and your mate to go to a special place for a romantic evening.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can come to a fine meeting of minds with a superior today, however, be sure to hold up your end of the bargain or you could lose face with him or her. Make your conversations concise and clear so that you can be understood.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A fellow associate has some good ideas for improving the efficiency of your career activities location, however, get the approval of your superior before beginning. This evening will be good for a relaxing at home with loved ones.

Birthingstone of May: Emerald Citrine

Palestinian business team in Cairo to discuss Jerusalem investments

CAIRO (AFP) — A Palestinian business delegation is visiting Egypt to discuss ways to boost Egyptian-Palestinian trade and investment cooperation, particularly in Jerusalem, delegation chief Faisal Hussein said.

Mr. Hussein, who manages the thorny Jerusalem file for the Palestinian National Authority, said the visit came at the invitation of Egyptian businessmen to explore means to develop bilateral relations.

"Egyptian businessmen will participate in some activities in Jerusalem such as construction, tourism and the hotel industry," Mr. Hussein said.

"We will also discuss during our visit here some projects for which we are seeking Egyptian participation," he added.

"Investment in Jerusalem is open to all Arab investors," he added.

Palestinians want the eastern sector of the Holy City as the capital of a future independent state.

Century turns Jordan into an offshore base

By Sulehman Al Khalidi Reuters

AMMAN — When businessman Omar Salah started wooing foreign partners to Jordan two years ago, rivals scoffed at his plans to produce Jordanian goods that could compete in the global market.

But Mr. Salah's pioneering Century Group, a conglomerate of joint ventures from software to steel mining, has defied the doubters. It aims to be Jordan's top textile exporter in 1997, with more ambitious projects coming on stream within two years.

Its clothes, supplied to designer label retailers, are already on sale in top fashion stores throughout Europe and the United States.

"Any shopping mall in the United States, in the biggest stores, you will find one of our products. We sell to the Gap, Victoria's Secret, Polo Ralph Lauren, Structure, to J. Crew and Banana Republic," says 30-year-old Salah.

"It was not an easy thing from the beginning, because the ideas I had required markets that Jordan did not have," he said.

While Jordan's business hopes were mostly dashed by the modest trickle of foreign capital since a 1994 peace treaty with Israel, Century found ways to reap the "peace dividend."

Mr. Salah's secret was to attract multinationals as 50 per cent equity partners to Jordan. Century could produce brand-name goods in Jordan, which were presold to Western markets.

The firm, employing 1,000 people since it was

set up in 1995 aims to be Jordan's largest industrial conglomerate by 2000.

Century also caught the attention of emerging funds looking at regional opportunities, including ING Barings whose Middle East director Angus Blair rates it highly for his clients.

"It's amazing for someone of his age... Who is not just looking at creating a profitable business but employing people and creating competitive business which Jordan is benefiting enormously from," Mr. Blair said. "He's unique."

Century has already lined up 12 projects, with a total of \$100 million of investments, half of which are now in operation, and the rest are due on stream by the end of 1998 or early 1999.

Its partners are U.S. Sara

Lee, American Standard Textiles and Levi's in textiles, U.S. Motorola in software, U.S. Leisure in plastics, Belgian Sibelco in sand mining and U.S. Shamrock and German Otto in retail.

Already three industrial projects with Dutch firms came on stream in 1997 — the largest an \$8 million can-making plant with Dutch Can Pack producing 350 million cans annually and a \$1 million dairy pudding plant with Balton. The third with Antilles Gold is in jewellery casting to European markets.

A \$5 million mining project with Belgian Sibelco to export silica sand for glassware should be ready by September and another with Motorola to develop software is being negotiated. Another \$5 million

plant to produce plastics with U.S. Leisure is being constructed and set for production by January 1998.

A pioneering \$2 million project to produce medical textiles such as hospital sheets with Cincinnati-based American Standard Textiles for the European market should be ready by end of 1997.

"Right now they are sewing in the U.S. and exporting to Europe. They decided instead Jordan will sew medical textiles and reexport to Europe and save a lot of money," Mr. Salah said.

Century's first three \$10 million ventures with Sara Lee have a \$60 million sales target by end of 1997, which would make it the country's largest textile exporter. A new \$3 million Levi's plant to produce shirts is due for end of 1997.

"A lot of European and American investors who traditionally had long-term investments in Israel now see they have no longer competitive wages in Israel and decided to shut down their plants and start new plants in Jordan," Mr. Salah said.

In the span of less than a year, Century has become the highest investor in the Irbid Industrial Estate, only an hour's drive away from Israel's northern industrial heartland.

Production costs between 40 and 70 per cent lower than Israel has been a major incentive for global giants such as Sara Lee already located in Israel who eye expansion in both the Israeli and European markets from its plant in Jordan.

"We knew the secret to marketing is to do a joint venture where your partner assures you of a market... We wanted to guarantee the market from the start... Because if your partner is in the business then suddenly the market is assured," Mr. Salah said.

A pool of competitive and educated workers along with Jordan's close proximity to European market gives the country an advantage as a potential outsourcing site for multinationals.

"Jordan has access to markets around the world and we have very competitive labour and it's getting better," Mr. Salah said.

Forging strong ties with U.S. retailers, Century plans a \$24 million shopping mall with U.S. Retailer Shamrock to be opened in Jordan by 1999. It has also set up Jordan's first buying office with the mail order group German Otto to act as a channel to "help Jordanian firms export all over the world," Mr. Salah said.

Century has also found a niche in attracting U.S. and European multinationals established in Israel who have either downsized or shifted some of their plants to Jordan.

South Korean firms troubled by snowballing debts — central bank

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean firms are suffering from snowballing debts, which climbed 19.4 per cent annually from 1990 to reach a total of \$513 billion at the end of 1996, a central bank report has said.

The soaring debts were incurred over the past six years as South Korean firms rushed to boost production capacity beyond their ability, the Bank of Korea said.

The bank blamed outdated financing formulas and overdependence on borrowings from financial institutions for their aggravated corporate financial woes.

As an example, the bank pinpointed the Hanbo Group, which went belly-up in January.

Hanbo, the country's 14th largest conglomerate, had borrowed a total of \$5.8 billion with its shareholders' equity standing at only \$101 million.

Hanbo's collapse prompted the South Korean government to embark on a sweeping revamp of its financial industry, but it was too late to save a second conglomerate, Sammi, which collapsed in March.

The bank report coincided with the publication of a survey of 600 large corporations by the Federation of Korean Industries (FKI), which predicted the country's faltering economy would bottom out in the fourth quarter of this year.

"The demand for such leading Korean industries as semiconductors, petrochemicals and steel remains low but prices are beginning to recover at a steady rate," an FKI spokesman said.

But he warned that the continuing depreciation of the Japanese yen would eat away at the competitiveness of South Korean products overseas.

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Cigarette company boosts sales by 190 per cent, transfers JD29.10 million to government

** SALES OF the International Tobacco and Cigarettes Company shot up by 190 per cent last year reaching JD41.34 million compared to JD21.74 million of sales in 1995. The company translated the increase in sales to mean that its share of the local market has expanded by 35 per cent. However, not all of the earnings belonged to the company as JD29.10 million in sales tax and "funds in trust" to activate planting tobacco were paid to the government in 1996. As such, the company was left with only JD12.24 million which, after deducting production costs and administrative and selling expenses came down to a net profit of JD1.86 million.

In 1995, the company paid the government a total of JD15.06 million and was left with a net profit of JD433,697. Compared to 1996, the net profit has grown by 430 per cent.

Board Chairman Hassan Anshasi told the general assembly that the company was able to finance new production lines and warehouses, costing about JD2 million, from the company own financial resources. In addition to covering the costs of the new capital investments, the company was able to bring down the indebtedness of the firm by about JD1.1 million. Mr. Anshasi told the shareholders that based on the approval of the general assembly in early 1996, the company's capital was raised by JD3.5 million for an investment by a foreign firm with which negotiations are still going on to become a partner.

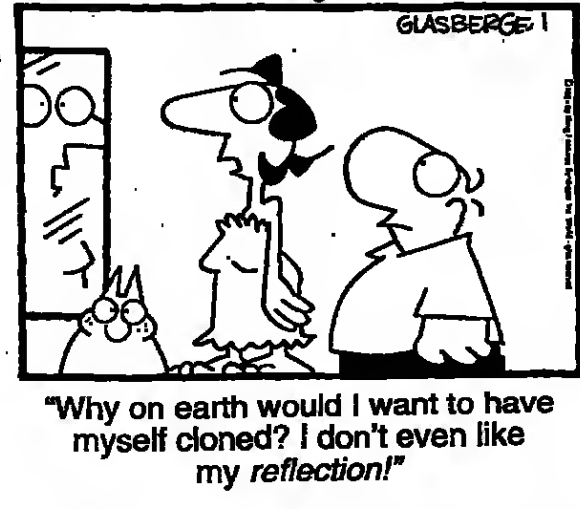
The chairman indicated that the increase in the capital will remain unsubscribed until the circumstances become suitable for either floating shares for subscription or agreeing on the equity with a foreign entity.

According to the annual report, total assets at the end of last year amounted to JD18.3 million, an increase of five per cent over the total assets at the end of 1995. The shareholders' equity grew by 17.3 per cent to reach more than JD12 million.

Noting that sales during the first three months of this year (1997) have reached close to JD11.5 million despite stiff competition and current prevailing economic conditions, Mr. Anshasi told the general assembly that the company is targeting JD50 million in sales in 1997.

A heated debate marred the general assembly meeting as some shareholders demanded the distribution of dividends but the board recommended that JD1.47 million of the profit be transferred to retained earnings. The meeting concluded by endorsing the recommendation of the board (Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ROGOM

ROBOD

RAMPHE

SEELAW

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: BARON UNIFY FARINA LAUNCH Answer: Compared to home, summer camp can be this — A "FAR" CRY

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTRAL AMMAN - SHAMSANI											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 06/05/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	F / E	OTV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
269,000	213,000	ARAB BANK	11.7	1.57	6	200	51000	255.00	255.00	-	
2,100	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	7	21343	37990	1.79	1.79	-03-	
5,500	4,100	CHINO ARAB BANK	9.3	3.33	2	11400	51300	4.50	4.50	-	
1,210	880	MID. EAST TRV. BK.	62.4	0.00	1	2050	2850	4.95	4.95	-01-	
5,100	4,250	THE HOUSING BK.	14.3	4.07	19	39555	170787	4.72	4.77	05+	
2,950	2,440	JOR. KIWAT BANK	18.5	0.00	4	320	616	2.53	2.56	03+	
1,080	800	JOR. OULP BANK	4.6	8.75	5	9900	7950	8.1	8.80	01+	
4,090	3,480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	14.4	3.29	2	60	212	3.33	3.54	02+	
3,600	3,000	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	21.2	0.00	2	450	1486	3.35	3.30	05-	
2,850	1,000	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITNA)	22.7	15.00	3	500	500	1.00	1.00	-	
5,150	4,450	ARAB BANKING CO.	22.7	0.00	2	1000	4700	4.74	4.70	04-	
1,440	1,000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	2	300	327	1.11	1.09	02-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 192.22 CHNG: -0.04											
2,700	2,300	GENERAL ARAB INSUR.	13.2	7.58	2	280	616	2.30	2.20	-10-	
2,200	1,850	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.2	5.41	1	250	463	1.95	1.85	-10-	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 115.42 CHNG: -0.49											
1,820	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	7.8	6.21	45	34094	54641	1.58	1.61	03+	
1,500	6,000	VECLIS. OWNERS FID.	7.8	4.93	1	300	2130	7.15	7.10	05-	
1,450	930	WAT. SUPPLY CO.	9	0.00	2	500	495	9.99	9.99	-	
1,030	820	IRAB. PETROL CO.	12.1	6.90	1	1600	4900	3.00	3.00	-01-	
3,720	2,900	JOR. INTL. INV. BDC.	7.8	0.00	1	1600	4900	3.00	3.00	-01-	
1,220	960	SHAMA EDUCATION	7.8	0.00	5	4300	4271	0.98	0.97	01-	
2,230	1,640	UNITED CO.	7.8	6.71	7	1800	2965	1.65	1.64	01-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 101.80 CHNG: +0.20											
1,250	930	ASTAMOROS	9	0.00	3	1600	1670	1.05	1.05	-	
3,800	3,060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	25.2	2.94	32	8432	31242	3.74	3.74	-	
3,900	2,710	JOR. PROSPECT MINES	8.7	3.21	1	1000	3130	3.09	3.12	03+	
6,100	4,950	AL-SABAH TRV. CO.	13.1	3.51	2	1140	1140	9.99	9.99	-10-	
10,400	8,720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.1	9.46	17	1228	11539	9.97	9.40	03+	
3,240	1,650	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	9	0.00	10	2166	3768	1.77	1.74	03-	
4,010	3,040	AL-SABAH TRV. CO.	9	5.75	12	1809	6294	3.47	3.48	01+	
7,250	5,650	JOR. CEMENT TRD.	7.2	2.58	1	100	695	6.90	6.95	04-	
2,570	2,050	JORDAN DAIRY	7.7	10.77	1	300	681	2.26	2.27	01+	
2,190	1,490	JOR. PAPER MANUF.	18.0	5.52	1	100	145	1.53	1.45	08-	
1,760	1,180	RAFA INDUSTRIES	8.2	0.00	4	1100	605	1.20	1.18	02-	
5,910	4,250	DAR ALDIAZ TRV. INV.	11.0	5.56	2	700	3144	4.47	4.50	03+	
960	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.8	0.00	8	3804	1938	5.1	5.1	-	
900	440	NATIONAL TRD.	8.2	10.21	4	1100	605	1.20	1.18	02-	
1,150	620	JOR. ROYAL IND.	9	0.00	4	650	510	58	55	-01-	
3,730	2,130	WAT. SUPPLY CO. WTR. PWR.	15.5	0.00	2	500	1275	2.45	2.55	-	
2,640	1,410	AL-SABAH TRV. CO.	9	0.00	2	1100	1299	1.45	1.47	02+	
1,780	1,130	JOR. INTL. RESOURCES	15.2	8.85	16	6500	7381	1.13	1.13	-	
1,230	840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.8	0.00	1	250	215	0.86	0.86	-	
2,320	1,730	EL-SAY REGRY WTR.	15.8	0.00	6	1622	2344	1.73	1.68	06-	
1,340	720	JORDAN STEEL	26.8	0.00	5	2600	2952	1.15	1.14	01-	
1,400	660	UNION CH. & VEG.	28.2	0.00	9	7350	6536	0.88	0.89	01+	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 113.75 CHNG: -0.61											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 150.12 CHNG: -0.26											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 06/05/1997											
570	370	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	2	200	78	40	39	-01-	
750	440	JOR. TRAV. FID.	11.7	0.00	3	1500	550	44	44	-	
840	670	UNION INV. SOF	63.1	0.00	13	52988	8508	67	66	-01-	
830	370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	21	24050	10604	46	44	-02-	
950	730	AL-SABAH TRV. CO.	9	0.00	2	11000	5280	73	72	-	
950	620	AL-SABAH TRV. CO.	14.5	0.00	6	8500	3315	65	64	-01-	
640	200	JOR. INTL. INVEST. VESCO	9	0.00	1	2300	552	24	24	-	
740	510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	13	2650	1467	55	55	-	
690	430	ARAB INTL. INV. FID.	50.7	0.00	2	1000	440	44	44	-	
630	400	WAT. SUPPLY CO. WTR. PWR.	9	0.00	52	65450	34123	55	52	-03-	
640	430	WAT. SUPPLY CO. WTR. PWR.	9	0.00	9	9250	5088	57	55	-02-	
970	720	JORDAN STEEL	26.8	0.00	5	2600	2952	1.15	1.14	01-	
720	600	MID. EAST TRV. BK.	62.4	0.00	2	500	185	61	62	-01+	
1,280	860	UNION TRADING CO.	25.9	0.00	3	1000	640	69	69	-	
770	550	RAFA INDUSTRIES	8.2	0.00	4	1100	605	1.20	1.18	02-	
630	390	IND. BDC.	25.9	0.00	6	8000	3360	42	42	-	
950	760	IND. BDC.	25.9	0.00	10	5557	4341	78	80	-02+	
590	360	I. TRAVEL MANUF.	9	0.00	2	1100	407	39	37	-02-	
820	590	WAT. SUPPLY CO.	9	0.00	2	1200	816	68	68	-	
1,000	1,000	EXT. ALUMINUM TRV.	9	0.00	3	66490	49868	1.00	1.00	-	
870	530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	13	9050	5973	66	66	-	
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Rockets dominate Sonics to take series opener

HOUSTON (R) — The Houston Rockets blasted off to a convincing victory over the Seattle SuperSonics in the opening game of their best-of-seven NBA Western Conference semifinal series Monday.

Mario Elie matched a playoff record with five three-pointers without a miss and Clyde Drexler had 22 points and nine rebounds as the Rockets soared to a 28-point second-half lead before winning 112-102.

Elie finished with 20 points and eight assists and Charles Barkley had 19 points and nine rebounds for Houston, which improved to 4-0 in post-season play.

Houston, trying to avenge a sweep at the hands of the Sonics in last year's West semifinals, hosts game two on Wednesday.

Shawn Kemp had 24 points and 11 rebounds and Gary Payton contributed 19 points to lead Seattle, which was pushed to a full five games by the Phoenix Suns in the first round.

Elie, averaging 18.5 points per game in the playoffs, tied a post-season mark by going 5-for-5 from three-point range.

"They left me open," Elie said. "I guess they didn't respect me. I guess they haven't been watching TV. If they keep doubling our big guys we'll keep firing away."



Fighting for a loose ball, Seattle SuperSonics' Sam Perkins (L) and Houston Rockets' Charles Barkley find themselves on the floor during second half action. The Rockets beat the Sonics 112-102 at the Summit in game one of the second round NBA playoffs (Reuters photo)

Houston took control late in the first quarter when Man Maloney nailed a three-pointer with 6:45 left in the period to ignite 21-10 spurt that closed the quarter and gave the Rockets a 35-25 lead.

Houston opened the second period with a 17-7 burst that gave them a 52-32 cushion.

Kemp helped Seattle get back in the game late in the period, scoring 10 points in a 20-9 run that brought the Sonics within 64-55 at half-

time. But the Rockets poured it on early in the second half with a 28-11 run that opened a commanding 92-66 bulge. Houston took a 96-71 lead into the final quarter.

"We were in a zone tonight and our outside shooting tonight was phenomenal," said Houston coach Rudy Tomjanovich. "I'm very happy with the result and our intensity."

Maloney drilled another three-pointer to open the fourth quarter and give

Houston its largest lead at 99-71.

Seattle got back in the game behind Hersey Hawkins, who kept his team from being embarrassed by nailing four treys for all 12 of his points in the final period. His last three-pointer got the Sonics within 111-99 with 1:37 to play.

"We gave them a lot of opportunities to shoot and they knocked them down," Payton said. "The three-pointers are killing us."

Korda slides into 2nd round

CORAL SPRINGS(R) — Second-seeded Czech Petr Korda "skated" into the second round of America's red clay tennis championship with a 6-3 6-4 victory over South African Neville Godwin on Monday.

Fifth seed Byron Black of Zimbabwe also advanced with a relatively easy 6-3 6-2 first-round victory over another South African, Marcos Ondruska.

The tournament, devoid of any top-20 players with virtually all of the sport's big names competing in European events, lost its third and eighth seeds on opening day.

In a match between two former U.S. collegiate champions, 88th-ranked Sargis Sargisian of Armenia upended 36th-ranked third seed Alex O'Brien of the U.S. 3-6 6-3 6-3.

Spaniard Juan Albert Viloca bounced eighth-seeded Austrian Gilbert Schaller 7-6 6-2.

Top-seeded Swede Jonas Bjorkman, ranked 23rd, and fourth-seeded defending champion Jason Stoltenberg of Australia, the runner-up Sunday in Atlanta, were scheduled to play first round matches on Tuesday.

Korda, ranked 29th, appeared to have an easy time disposing of the 95th-ranked Godwin, but said court conditions kept him from enjoying himself during the one hour contest.

"It feels like you're on ice," he complained. "It's very slippery and it was affecting my movement. Whenever I'm on a court that's slippery I'm afraid to move."

Korda's fear was not unfounded. The former French Open finalist needed surgery to repair groin injuries in 1995 and 1996.

The 64th-ranked Black was much more comfortable slip-sliding his way to victory.

"The court was a little bit slippery, but I was able to take control of the points and use the court to my advantage."

Draw leaves United still waiting

LONDON (R) — Manchester United's hopes of virtually wrapping up the English League title were thwarted when they were held to a 3-3 draw by Middlesbrough in a dramatic match at rain-lashed Old Trafford on Monday.

Middlesbrough, coached by former Manchester United captain Bryan Robson, led United 1-0 and 3-1 but in the end were glad to settle for a point in their battle to avoid relegation, although it looks likely their Italian striker Fabrizio Ravanelli, who damaged a hamstring, will miss the rest of the season, including the F.A. Cup final against Chelsea on May 17.

The result leaves United, who also came from two goals down to force a draw at Leicester on Saturday, on 71 points with two home matches to play against Newcastle on Thursday and West Ham next Sunday.

It also means that both Liverpool (67 points from 36 games) and Newcastle (63 from 35) could yet pip United, chasing their fourth title in five years.

Middlesbrough, who also drew 3-3 at Old Trafford against Chesterfield in the F.A. Cup three weeks ago, remain second from bottom with 37 points from 36 matches but showed enough spirit and determination which could yet save them from the drop.

The heavy rain made conditions extremely difficult for the players and was one of the reasons for four goals in an eight-minute spell just before halftime.

But Juninho, squelching through the puddles with comparative ease, put Middlesbrough ahead in the 15th minute after United had dominated the opening spell.

The Brazilian curled the ball past Peter Schmeichel with his right foot for his 14th goal of the season after a 14-pass move which started deep inside their own half.

But Middlesbrough then suffered a double

blow in the 34th minute when Ravanelli, who had hit a post after 12 minutes, limped off clutching the back of his left leg and 30 seconds later Roy Keane equalised for United.

Robson said afterwards the Italian, who has scored 31 goals this season, was very doubtful for the last two remaining league matches at Blackburn and Leeds and the cup final although they would know more after the injury was scanned on Tuesday.

But despite losing Ravanelli and conceding the goal, Middlesbrough came storming back and were 3-1 up inside six minutes.

In the 36th minute Emerson blasted a powerful drive over United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel and in the 40th minute Robbie Mustoe's accurate centre was perfectly crossed for Craig Hignett who headed home his seventh goal of the season.

But two minutes later United pulled themselves back into contention when defender Gary Neville gave goalkeeper Ben Roberts no chance with a right-footed drive for his first senior goal for Manchester United.

Norwegian Ole Solskjaer, who scored both United's goals at Leicester, took his tally to 18 for the season, heading home after 67 minutes to make it 3-3. Robson said afterwards: "It was a vital point for us because it keeps us in touch with the teams above us. I thought the turning point was their second goal. If we could have held a two-goal lead into half-time it might have been different, but we went a bit slack after that."

Disappointed United manager Alex Ferguson said: "All credit to the team for coming back from 3-1 down, but our defending was awful, absolutely terrible. I think I know what the problem is and hopefully we'll solve it before we play Newcastle on Thursday."

U.S.-Australia tie set for Washington

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States and Australia will meet here for their Davis Cup semi-final tie on September 19-21, the U.S. Tennis Association said Monday.

The surface will be hard-court and the matches will be played at the 7,500-seat Fitzgerald Tennis Centre.

"The international importance of our nation's capital was an obvious consideration in the selection process," USTA President Harry Marmont said. "The rivalry between the United States and Australia is one of the fiercest in the history of the Davis Cup."

The U.S. team has won a record 31 Davis cups. Australia is next best with 26. The nations last met in the 1993 opening round with Australia winning 4-1 at Melbourne.

Agassi pulls out of German Open

HAMBURG (R) — Andre Agassi, angered by German tennis officials on Monday by pulling out of the German Open a day before he was due to play his first-round match.

The recently-married Agassi, due to meet Germany's Daniel Elsner in the opening round of the \$2.3 million tournament, said in a short faxed message to the ATP he was pulling out due to a recurrent wrist injury.

Officials of the German Tennis Federation were annoyed both at the short notice of the withdrawal and by the fact that Agassi's message was not sent directly to them in Hamburg but to the ATP in Ponte Vedra, Florida.

Elsner will advance to meet Spain's Carlos Costa.



Andre Agassi



Sweden's Jan-Ove Waldner fires a shot back to Belarus' Vladimir Samsonov during the men's singles finals at the 44th World Table Tennis Championships. Waldner won the cup in three straight games (Reuters photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Trapattoni staying at Bayern

ROME (AFP) — Bayern Munich's Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni is staying with the Bavarian giants for another season, having confirmed Monday that he has turned down approaches from as Roma. Trapattoni told Italian television he would honour the final year of his contract in Munich after the Germans insisted he see the agreement through to June 1998. "A week ago I had a meeting with Roma chairman Franco Sensi and told him I would have accepted his proposals had Bayern agreed to release me. But Bayern have not authorised my departure and there is nothing I can do about that. I am also indebted to Bayern for taking me on at a difficult stage of my career," Trapattoni said.

Alphand tries F1 piste

PARIS (AFP) — Alpine skiing world champion Luc Alphand is to swap his skis for a test run in a Formula One cockpit Friday in the French town of Luc. Having already had a shot at Formula Three, Alphand will follow a course to acquaint himself with a Formula One car provided by former French team AGS, who are organising practice sessions for would-be drivers.

Burkina Faso sack coach

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) — Burkina Faso's Football Federation have sacked Bulgarian coach Ivan Vutov and replaced him with Malick Jabir, a Ghanaian, officials announced here. Results under Vutov, only appointed last June, had not been up to standard the federation said, with the team tasting defeat in all four of their World Cup qualifiers to date. Jabir becomes the team's fourth coach since last year's African Nations Cup.

Klinsmann linked with Everton

LONDON (R) — Bayern Munich striker Juergen Klinsmann will have talks with Everton chairman Peter Johnson within the next 48 hours, British newspapers reported on Monday. According to the reports, Johnson is desperate to rebuild his ailing premier league club around the German captain who was an immediate success at Tottenham two seasons ago and won England's player of the year award. However, he walked out on the London club amid considerable acrimony after just one season to return home to Bayern. Klinsmann, 32, has made it clear he would love to return to Britain but has refused to make any further comment. "At the moment my family are the most important thing. Apart from that I want to help Bayern Munich to the German championship," he said.

Unification not on Holyfield's mind

HOUSTON (AFP) — Show Evander Holyfield the money. But don't bother the World Boxing Association champion with details such as unifying the world heavyweight titles. Holyfield, set to fight Mike Tyson on June 28 in a rematch of their November World Boxing Association (WBA) fight, said becoming the undisputed world champion was less important to him than setting prizemoney records. "I'm not interested in belts anymore," Holyfield said. "I'm interested in breaking purse records." That comes as bad news to British handlers Lennox Lewis and Henry Akinwande, who are scheduled to meet in Atlantic City in July for the World Boxing Council (WBC) version of the crown. Michael Moorer is the International Boxing Federation (IBF) champion.

Muster tops ATP Tour prize-money winners

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2. Pete Sampras (U.S.)	\$737,378
3. Michael Chang (U.S.)	\$717,899
4. Marcelo Rios (Chile)	\$551,948
5. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)	\$505,985
6. Carlos Moya (Spain)	\$474,124
7. Alex Corretja (Spain)	\$410,263
8. Todd Woodbridge (Australia)	\$399,573
9. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)	\$382,735
10. R. Krajicek (Netherlands)	\$378,655
11. Jonas Bjorkman (Sweden)	\$364,911
12. Jim Courier (U.S.)	\$314,110
13. Marc Rosset (Switzerland)	\$304,863
14. Bohdan Ulihrach (Czech R)	\$301,974
15. Mark Woodforde (Australia)	\$288,743
16. Albert Costa (Spain)	\$283,423
17. M. Philippoussis (Australia)	\$257,780
18. Patrick Rafter (Australia)	\$238,776
19. Thomas Enqvist (Sweden)	\$237,665
20. Tim Henman (Britain)	\$231,862

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Seles takes a swipe at prodigies and parents

ROME (R) — Monica Seles returned to the Italian Open women's tennis tournament for the first time in five years Monday with some sharp words for pushy parents and child prodigies.

The American, who won in Rome as a 16-year-old Yugoslavian newcomer in 1990 when she beat Martina Navratilova, discussed her younger rivals and their parents at a news conference on the first day of play.

"I've learned not to expect much from kids," the former teen sensation said when asked how she felt about the new generation of youngsters led by Switzerland's 16-year-old world No. 1 Martina Hingis.

"What I don't like at all is parents putting their children as soon as they are born on a tennis court and forcing them to like tennis," said Seles, who at 17 had been the youngest world No. 1 in history before Hingis emerged.

"Sixteen-year-old kids just want to have fun and I think that's what they should do," she said.

However she admitted that she regretted rebelling against her own parents as a teenager and, asked if there was one thing she would



Monica Seles

change if she could be 16 again, jokingly replied "certainly the stabbing."

The American's last appearance in Rome in 1992 was the year before she was stabbed on court in

Hamburg by a spectator during an interval between games. She was 17 and the incident left mental scars that took years to heal.

Seles said Hingis was clearly the best emerging

player at the moment, although most people might say that someone who has already captured the top ranking has already emerged.

Hingis was to have been the top women's seed at the Foro Italico this year but she pulled out last month after injuring herself in a horse riding accident.

World No. 2 Steffi Graf is also absent from the Italian open, leaving third-ranked Seles as the clear favourite in the draw.

Seles, who said she had overcome a recent injury and had been training for two weeks, was given a bye into the second round and faces the winner of the match between Czech qualifier Sandra Kleinova and Austria's Barbara Schett.

The first top player she is due to encounter is France's 10th seed Mary Pierce at the round of 16 stage.

"I got a very tough draw," Seles insisted. "There are very good players even in the first rounds."

In Monday's opening matches, two seeds won easily.

France's 15th seed Nathalie Tauziat beat Helena Sukova 6-4 6-2 while Belgian 13th seed Sabine Appelmans beat Naoki Sawamatsu of Japan 6-3 6-1.

Japan's 2008 Olympics bid snubbed by governing party

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's governing party Tuesday put a damper on rivaling bids by two Japanese cities to host the summer Olympics in 2008, calling them too costly for the times of austerity.

"How can we afford the Olympics when we need to rebuild the national finances," Masakuni Murakami, a senior upper house deputy of the Liberal Democratic Party, told a party executive meeting.

Osaka and Yokohama presented their Olympic plans to the Japanese Olympic Committee on April 30 and the national committee will choose one of them as Japan's sole candidate for the 2008 games in August.

But Kaneko Muraoka, the party whip, said the Olympics would cost two to three trillion Yen (\$16 to \$24 billion) including games-related infrastructure investment.

"We are in no situation which will

allow more public works," he said.

Shumpei Tsukahara, who heads the party's organisational headquarters, suggested the cities should seek to host the Olympics with minimum government involvement.

But Yoshiyuki Kamei, a deputy from Yokohama, insisted that his international port city was planning to use existing facilities including those in surrounding provinces such as Tokyo.

Japan hosted the 1964 summer games in Tokyo, the first Olympics held in Asia, catapulting itself into the ranks of developed countries.

It also staged the Winter Games in Sapporo in 1972 and will host another edition in Nagano next year with the state government shouldering a half of costs for building Olympic venues.

Of an estimated 170 billion Yen (\$1.4 billion) spent on construction of nine Olympic competition venues and

six related facilities in Nagano, some 72 billion Yen came from state funds, analysts said.

It is not clear how much money the government spent on construction of roads serving Olympic facilities, for which Nagano's municipal and provincial governments chipped in some 250 billion Yen.

State-run corporations also poured 1,240 billion Yen into construction of a super highway and a bullet-train line stretching some 200 kilometres (125 miles) from Tokyo to Nagano for what critics called "builders games."

The 2008 summer Olympics city will be chosen by the International Olympic Committee in 2001.

Many of the candidates for the 2004 Summer Games — including Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro and Stockholm — are expected to go for another chance.

MAJOR LEAGUE RESULTS

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Kansas City	2	Boston	0
Anaheim	7	Baltimore	2
Minnesota	9	New York	8
Toronto	3	Detroit	1
Milwaukee	11	Oakland	7
Texas at Cleveland	(Postponed)		

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Florida	3	Pittsburgh	0
Houston	9	Philadelphia	2
Atlanta	2	St. Louis	1
New York	6	Colorado	1
Los Angeles	3	Cincinnati	1
San Francisco	4	Montreal	2

Schalke out to upset Inter in UEFA Cup final

PARIS (AFP) — Schalke go into the first European final in their 93-year history when they play host to Italy's Inter Milan in the first leg of the UEFA Cup final on Wednesday, but striker Marc Wilmots has shrugged off suggestions that his side start the match as underdogs.

"We're not afraid," said the Belgian. "It's fifty-fifty."

Wilmots' confidence is well founded. The team from the Ruhr coal-mining region have dug out victories in all five of their home matches in this year's competition, and the two-legged final offers them a rare chance to outshine local rivals Borussia Dortmund — if only for a

few weeks.

Schalke's resolve is likely to have been stiffened by Saturday's 1-0 Bundesliga loss to Dortmund, who have an Italian job of their own later this month when they tackle Juventus in the European Cup final.

That League defeat continued a depressing sequence domestically for Schalke, who have not won in two months in the Bundesliga — a run covering eight matches.

Their form in Europe, however, remains a source of encouragement, and Thomas Linke, like Wilmots a scorer in the semi-final win over Tenerife, refuses to be intimidated by Inter's reputation.

"Milan are a huge team, a great name," Linke said. "But we have already shown in Europe that with our discipline we can hold our own against superior teams."

"This combative team spirit is something Inter can never have," he claimed.

Schalke have attackers Martin Max and Youri Mulder on the injury list, though Max was adamant that he would play "even if only 70 per cent fit".

"We're all going to give everything because it would be a dream to hold the Cup in our hands," he added.

Captain and playmaker Olaf Thon is one of the few star names in the Schalke ranks, and he believes the 56,000 supporters ready to pack the Parkstadion will help his side "achieve the impossible" against a depleted Italian side.

Suspension and injuries are set to rob Inter coach Roy Hodgson of several key play-

ers for the match.

Frenchmen Jocelyn Angloma and Youri Djorkaeff, together with English mid-field workhorse Paul Ince, are all suspended, while Swiss star Ciriaco Sforza and defender Roberto Pistone are both doubtful with injuries.

Sforza was taken off during Inter's disappointing 1-0 home defeat by Vicenza on Saturday with a bruised left shin. Pistone played the match with a pain-killing injection.

That defeat, combined with Parma's win over Atalanta, means Inter lost ground in the fight for Serie A's second Champions' League spot, and striker Ivan Zamorano said he and his team-mates would be all the more motivated on Wednesday as a result.

"We cannot let down our president by finishing the season without winning anything," the Chilean said.

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Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
AAKQJ QJ105 QJ5 AKQ108
What is your opening bid?
Q. 3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
AAQJ888 QJ105 QAKJ10984
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 14 Pass
44 Pass 7
What do you bid now?
Q. 4 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:
AA72 QASS QJ105 QAKJ108
The bidding has proceeded:
WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
10 Pass 14 Pass
44 Pass 7
What action do you take?
Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
AAKJ6 QASS QJ5 AKK103
Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one heart. What action do you take?
Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
AAJ5 QK888 Q8 AAQ878
The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
10 Pass 14 Pass
44 Pass 7
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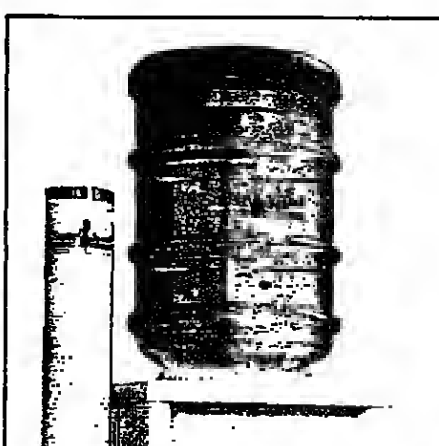
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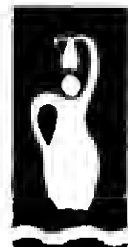
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Turkey's premier starts crackdown against media

ANKARA (AFP) — Islamist Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan announced a crackdown against the media on Tuesday saying that his cabinet was preparing a bill to prevent the press from publishing "wrong news stories."

"Ninety per cent of the media are releasing lies for news," Mr. Erbakan told a meeting of his pro-Islamist Welfare Party. "It will be useful to introduce an arrangement that will prevent the publishing of incorrect news."

"The media has created an artificial agenda in Turkey in the last two months, hurting our country's interests, this must be prevented," Mr. Erbakan said.

The premier is embroiled in a bitter row with the powerful and pro-secular military over creeping Islamisation and most Turkish newspapers and television stations have backed the army's stand on the matter.

Turkey's top political body,

the military-dominated National Security Council, in February and April ordered the government to implement a number of tough measures to curb religious extremism.

Since then the interior ministry has ordered the closure of scores of illegal private Islamist schools, but Welfare is reluctant to accept a military-sponsored education reform under which hundreds of state-run religious academies would be closed.

Mr. Erbakan's plan to muzzle the media comes as the U.S.-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) on Saturday included him in its yearly list of "enemies of the press."

The CPJ's list of the enemies of the press also included Antar Zouabri, leader of Algeria's rebel Islamic Army Group (GIA), Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Cuban President Fidel Castro and Nigeria's military leader Sani Abacha, who is a close friend of Mr. Erbakan.

Bid to lift immunity on deputies

ANKARA (AP) — Requests to indict two deputies in a scandal that unveiled ties between gangsters and politicians were submitted to the Turkish parliament on Tuesday.

Parliament must now decide whether to lift the immunity of the deputies, former Interior Minister Mehmet Agar and Sedar Bucak, both from the junior coalition centre-right party of Deputy Premier Tansu Ciller.

The deputies emerged as key political figures in the scandal which surfaced after a traffic accident in November.

A fugitive terrorist and a police chief riding in a car with Mr. Bucak were killed in the accident.

A parliament report last month said the team was on its way to an armed attack at the time of the accident. The assault weapons and silencers found in the car belonged to the police department.

Mr. Agar was forced to resign his post as interior minister.

Opposition parties have been pressuring the coalition for months to act upon the scandal. Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who submitted the requests on Tuesday as required by law, had held off passing on the prosecution request, apparently to win favour with Mrs. Ciller.

The deputies can be tried on charges of forming an armed gang if parliament lifts their legal immunity.

No date has yet been decided for the lengthy debate in parliament.

Turkey, Azerbaijan sign 7 agreements

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey and Azerbaijan signed Monday seven agreements and a statement on bilateral cooperation during an official visit by Azerbaijan President Geydar Aliyev.

The agreements covered cooperation in fields ranging from air and sea navigation, sports and social security to electric power and industry.

Mr. Aliyev and Turkish President Suleiman Demirel signed a declaration on the development of strategic cooperation between their respective countries, a presidential spokesman said.

They underlined their desire to see oil from Azerbaijan's fields in the Caspian Sea exported to the West via a pipeline passing through Turkey to the Mediterranean. The final route of the pipeline is yet to be decided.

The declaration also demanded the unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territory occupied since fighting between 1988 and 1994 over Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave of Nagorno Karabakh.

Cyprus asks U.S., Israel to prevent Turkish overflights

NICOSIA (AP) — Cyprus asked the United States and Israel Monday to ensure that its airspace is not violated by Turkish warplanes during proposed war games in the Mediterranean involving the three nations.

Turkey, which has been occupying the northern third of Cyprus since a 1974 invasion, routinely violates Cyprus airspace with overflights by its warplanes despite repeated protests to

the U.N. by the Nicosia government.

Government spokesman Manolis Christofides said the United States and Israel should "tell Turkey that Cyprus air space must not be violated and that the (Cyprus) authorities are duly informed about these exercises."

"They have a moral obligation to do so, otherwise they risk becoming involved in encouraging their partner

(Turkey) to violate international norms and practices," he added.

Mr. Christofides also said Israel has informed Cyprus that its recent defence cooperation agreements with Turkey will not affect its friendly relations with Nicosia in any way.

Turkey's Defence Minister Turhan Tayan was in Israel last week. It was the first visit to Israel by a Turkish defence minister.

Iraqis flee troubled homeland

DUBAI (AFP) — The death of 17 illegal Iraqi immigrants in a shipwreck off the Turkish coast this week has once again cast the spotlight on the human tide fleeing oppression and economic hardship in Iraq.

Since punitive economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, a vast wave of Iraqi immigrants have risked their lives to escape to a better life in Europe.

The Ahmad family was just a small part of the exodus, fleeing Iraq three years ago and setting themselves up in Istanbul before deciding to pay a smuggler \$3,000 per head to land them on the Greek island of Samos.

But on Sunday morning at least 17 of the family, including four women and five children, drowned when the two small Turkish boats carrying them overturned off the Dilek Peninsula after setting out from the Turkish port of Kusadasi.

The Iraqi government gives no figures for the number of immigrants leaving the country, but month after month groups of illegal Iraqi immigrants are uncovered.

In Romania last March truckloads of Iraqis were found entering the country

from Bulgaria and Turkey, and a similar cargo was uncovered near Grenoble, France in November heading for the Netherlands.

The following month the Dutch authorities uncovered a clandestine network that had managed to provide between 4,000 and 5,000 Iraqis with forged passports, while 15 Iraqi immigrants in jail in Cyprus swallowed detergent in a mass suicide attempt because they were terrified of being sent home.

Iraq is still smarting from the highly-embarrassing defection of its flag-bearer, a weightlifter, at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

A survey by the U.S. periodical foreign affairs estimated that three million Iraqis, out of a total of 22 million, were now living abroad.

Many are educated middle-class professionals, and many are Christians.

Although Iraq is a secular state, church officials in Baghdad estimate only 500,000 Christians remain in Iraq, compared to around three million in the 1980s.

"It is a big problem, all the young boys want to leave to go abroad," said a European businessman in Baghdad.

Each Iraqi wanting to leave the country first has to pay 400,000 dinars (\$333)

to the government.

According to another Western businessman, most of them then head for Amman and do the round of consulates there in a desperate bid to find a third country that will take them. However, most of them return demoralised to Iraq.

"They have great difficulty obtaining visas, even in usually welcoming countries such as Canada and New Zealand," he added.

The Kurds of northern Iraq, which has been controlled by Kurdish factions in defiance of Baghdad since 1991, make up another large wave of immigrants.

The head of a humanitarian organisation in the main Iraqi Kurdistan city of Erbil said most Kurdish immigrants prefer to use smugglers to get them to a safe haven.

"They don't want to be a refugee, they don't want to run that gauntlet so they choose the smugglers' route... The preferred route is certainly through Turkey to Greece, from there they go to Italy, Switzerland and Germany," he said.

The official said one of his employees managed to get to the Netherlands in three days, while another bought an Iraqi passport with a Turkish visa for \$1,000.

Abu Marzouk thanks King, PNA; promises to continue his struggle

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The former chief of Hamas, Musa Abu Marzouk who arrived here Monday night following a 22-month detention in the United States, said his group will continue its fight against Israel as long as it "refuses to recognise the rights of the Palestinian people."

Mr. Abu Marzouk said that his Islamic Resistance Movement would only stop fighting Israel "if my people gain their freedom and their problems settled in a peaceful manner."

"The Palestinians are desperate for peace, more than any other nation in the world, but if that did not happen; if we are not given our rights then we have no choice but to fight for our future," Mr. Abu Marzouk said in a press conference hours after he arrived here on a private U.S. plane.

"Hamas was and is still against attacking civilians, but all recent attacks against Israeli civilian targets followed similar Israeli attacks against Palestinians. If Israel stops its harassment of the Palestinians, we will do as well."

Mr. Abu Marzouk said he had reached an agreement with the U.S. to write to the Jordanian government asking that the Kingdom host him.

"The Jordanian government replied positively and agreed to allow me to come to Jordan. After that the U.S. deported me on a private jet," the 46-year-old Hamas activist, who was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza, said during the 35-minute press conference in a villa in western Amman.

Mr. Abu Marzouk's arrival in Jordan ended his 22-month-old ordeal which started with his detention upon arrival at Kennedy Airport-New York in July 1995. He was originally held for "violation of U.S. immigration laws."

But Israel later demanded he be extradited for his alleged involvement in a series of suicide attacks against Israel. Later, Tel Aviv dropped its demand for his extradition for fear of retaliation by Hamas.

However, Mr. Abu Marzouk said that he did not think that if the Israelis had any evidence that would implicate him, they would have dropped the request.



Musa Abu Marzouk, political leader of Hamas, embraces Jordanian Islamist leader Ziad Abu Ghaneimeh on Tuesday. Mr. Abu Marzouk pledged to continue to work for the organisation after his release from nearly two years of detention in a New York jail (Reuters photo)

"Their accusations that I was involved in attacks against Israel were baseless," he said.

He said that the deal secured his release included giving up "my resident permit, refraining from suing the United States government and a pledge that I will not visit the U.S. again, which I accepted."

The agreement with U.S. authorities also stipulated that no American pressure be put on any country he wishes to visit or reside in.

He said that the "U.S. authorities have confiscated all my documents including my driving licence, cheque book, my Yemeni passport and left me with nothing but my Egyptian travel document."

Mr. Abu Marzouk entered into what is called in legal terms "a plea of no contender" meaning that he would not contest the expulsion charges brought against him by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) following his release.

"These charges state that Abu Marzouk is an alien who is engaged in terrorist activity," the INS said in a statement.

Mr. Abu Marzouk's attorney, Michael Kennedy, however, denied the charges and said Mr. Abu Marzouk "denies he has ever participated in terrorist activities or intends to ever participate in terrorist activities."

Mr. Abu Marzouk said he would continue his political involvement and denied that the deal for his release stipulated that he quit his political activities.

"Jordanian resident regulations do not prohibit any resident from practising political activities and I will continue from inside and outside Jordan," he said.

Mr. Abu Marzouk praised the Jordanian and Egyptian governments for refusing to accept American conditions to release him. He said these conditions were submitted to Amman and Cairo during a visit by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Chief Louis Freeh.

"The FBI chief was trying to convince Jordanian and Egyptian leaders to accept several conditions to release me which they refused and I did as well," he commented.

"The FBI conditions were that I should refrain from visiting countries which are blacklisted by the U.S. (for alleged terrorist activities), which include Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya and other countries and to retire from political life which I declined to agree to."

He added he wanted "to extend his appreciation for every one who helped him to secure his release from U.S. detention, especially King Hussein, Abu Ammar (nom deguerre for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat) and Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak who were involved in mediation efforts to release me."

Mr. Abu Marzouk added that President Arafat had called his father in Gaza and congratulated him on his release.

He said Israel refused to allow his return to Gaza Strip. He said his family, who are still in the United States and have U.S. citizenship, will join him in Jordan soon and are expected here any time.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali said Mr. Abu Marzouk was free to practise any activity he wished and was welcome to stay in Jordan.

"There are no conditions (for Mr. Abu Marzouk to reside in Jordan) as long as he behaves just as anybody else," the premier said following a cabinet session.

"He is free to live here as long as he likes...every resident has the right to practise any activity he wishes as long as it does not harm Jordan politically, economically and militarily," Dr. Majali said.

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PNA announces death sentence for illegal land sales to Israelis

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) will sentence to death Palestinians who sell land to Israelis through unauthorised agents to counter expansion of Jewish settlements, Justice Minister Freih Abu Meddein said on Tuesday.

"We are using the Jordanian military law in the West Bank until the Palestinian legislative council drafts a new Palestinian law," Mr. Abu Meddein told Reuters. "There is a death penalty for those selling land to Israelis."

"It is a case of great treason and of selling the homeland, and we will not allow this," said Prosecutor General Khaled Kidra.

The PNA says all land deals now needed its approval as would any real estate agent. If a sale to an Israeli took place through an "authorised" agent then the agent rather than the owner faced the death penalty.

Last week the PNA said it banned the sale to Israelis of land in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Arab east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

and Gaza Strip in 1967. Under a framework 1993 interim peace deal it has handed most of Gaza and some parts of the West Bank to Palestinian rule.

"We are simply defending our own land because Israel is imposing its own laws on occupied land and this is a violation of international laws which states that an occupier can only supervise an occupied land using the latter's laws," Mr. Kidra said.

PNA officials said the move was spurred by many complaints from Palestinians who sold land through agents unaware that the agents were working for Israel.

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians ground to a halt and violence erupted after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government sent bulldozers to begin a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem on March 18.

Palestinians, who want an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with Arab east Jerusalem as its capital, view all Jewish settlement on land occupied by Israel in 1967 as pre-empting final status peace talks.



103-year-old becomes oldest person to get Cambridge degree

LONDON (AFP) — 103-year-old Molly Maxwell is set next week to become the oldest person ever to get a degree from the prestigious university. She is to collect the award at a special ceremony on her 104th birthday next Tuesday, more than 80 years after leaving the university. Maxwell completed her studies in modern languages in 1917 and left with an "honours" certificate — women were not allowed to receive degrees and become members of the university until 1948. The university recently said women who completed degree courses prior to 1948 can be given degrees, and Maxwell, who now lives in a London nursing home, asked to be given her just reward at long last. "She asked the nursing staff to get in touch with us and we were delighted to help," a Cambridge university spokesman said Tuesday. "She completed the degree course and the certificate is really just a formality. She will certainly be the oldest person to receive a degree certificate from us."

Peru actors in hot water for impersonating rebels

LIMA (R) — Peru's police, still on edge from the four-month Lima hostage crisis, had a brief scare when they mistook a band of actors for gun-toting Marxist rebels storming the North Korean embassy. The actors were dressed as Tupac Amaru rebels for an episode of the Peruvian television soap opera "Diamonds and Hearts," police said. The director of the programme, Carlos Cano, had no permission for the filming and was detained after the incident on Sunday, police said, but later released without charges. "They were about to blow us to pieces," the stunned director told reporters. The North Korean embassy lies in the same plush San Isidro district where Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas held 72 hostages for 126 days until April 22.

Turkish pilots sacked for cockpit punch-up

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish Airlines (THY) said it had sacked two pilots who had a punch-up in the cockpit of a THY passenger plane on a flight between Bangkok and Istanbul. THY said it halted flights by pilots Altan Tezcan and Erdogan Gecim immediately after the April 4 incident. The THY executive board later annulled the pilots' contracts. Turkish newspapers said the incident occurred because of an apparent misunderstanding by Tezcan of altitude instructions by the control tower 45 minutes after take-off from Bangkok. Around 240 passengers were travelling on the Airbus 340 plane, according to Sabah newspaper. Yeni Yuzyl daily quoted Gecim as telling Tezcan: "Are you deaf? He's telling you something and you are doing something completely different." The paper said Gecim then slapped Tezcan's knuckles as he tried to programme the data into the autopilot. The pair then untied their belts for a fistfight, which only ended with the intervention of other staff. A third, junior pilot completed the flight, newspapers said.